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Transcript 1

LEO STRAUSS, NOTES ON LESSING'S *NATHAN THE WISE* (1940 AND 1942)

Editorial note: Leo Strauss's notes on Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1779 play *Nathan the Wise* were prepared for two different occasions. Strauss wrote the first set of notes (Leo Strauss Papers, Box 18, Folder 7, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library) for a seminar titled "Continental Champions of Freedom of Thought," which he taught at the New School for Social Research in the spring of 1940. The announcement in the 1939/1940 course catalog of the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science reads: "410-0. CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONS OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT—LEO STRAUSS. *Spring term. Fridays, 8:10–10:00 P.M.* The events of the last decades have heightened our interest and increased our understanding of the fight waged by such men as Bayle, Voltaire, and Lessing for freedom of thought. What did they understand by freedom of thought? How did they conceive of its political and institutional implications? To what extent is their view of freedom of thought tinged by the peculiar prejudices of their age? And how did it influence the literary form of their writings?" The second set of notes (Leo Strauss Papers, Box 16, Folder 5) brings together all available drafts for a lecture on "The Political Message of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*." While the exact date is not known, Strauss's remarks in the notes suggest that he gave, or intended to give, the lecture in the General Seminar, the faculty colloquium of the Graduate Faculty, sometime after March 1942.[1]

All translations are my own. The translations from *Nathan the Wise* are taken from a draft translation of the play that Martin Yaffe and I are

preparing for publication. The footnotes as well as the additions in the square […] brackets and translations are by the editor. Angle brackets < … > indicate passages that Strauss crossed out. Strauss's underlinings have been replaced by the volume editors with italics. The editor thanks Jenny Strauss Clay, who gave permission for the publication of these notes and retains her rights to the material.

Notes from a Seminar on "Continental Champions of Freedom of Thought"

(Graduate Faculty, New School for Social Research, 1940)

Nathan der Weise I

A dramatic *poem*—it is not decided whether it is a tragedy or a comedy—only its *dramatic* nature is emphasized.

The occasion: Lessing had been engaged for about 2 years in a violent controversy with the orthodox Lutheranians—his sovereign, the elector of Brunswick, had forbidden him to continue the controversy—he *escaped* into poetry.

(Lessing's ruses: he hid the name of the author of the "fragments," suggesting the name of another dead heretic …)

He escapes into poetry—into a *drama*. What is the peculiar nature of dramatic poetry?

1. The most *vulgar* poetry—it does not even presuppose *reading Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, p.m.[2], p. 91 Ab.[3] 1; 104 col. 1 Ab. 3; 105 col. 1 Ab. 2.[4]
2. In a drama, the poet *never* speaks in his own name. The poet may deceive in particular by the agreement of all *nice* characters …

The subject: The conflict of the 3 great religions is being happily settled in the *holy land* during the *Age of Faith*. The atmosphere of highest religious tensions may be particularly favorable to freedom of the mind—more than the free atmosphere of enlightened 18th century Europe (cf. "Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen": eine Klugheit, für die wir viel zu weise geworden sind [a prudence for which we have become far too wise][5]).

Palestine was then a *Muslim* country > Averroism; Islamic *mono*theism, De tribus impostoribus [Of the Three Impostors].[6]

The leading figure, a *Jew*: the *highest* tension, the highest degree of religious fanaticism may lead to the most radical emancipation > Spinoza—or Maimonides (Leibniz and Mendelssohn).[7]

The Jew is a *merchant*: trade > freedom of the mind.

The action: Nice people belonging to various religions are brought together in an atmosphere hot with religious exclusiveness by a number of strange coincidences, so that they can recognize mutually their *human* dignity, and even their *blood-relationship*.

The action—the happy end—is in accordance with the thesis: Providence, God rewards good actions, done on earth, on earth, "optimism." The religion of providence and optimism is based on *reason* (—nature—charity) ≠ revelation (—miracles—intolerance and pride).

The revelation of that true natural religion is an essential part of the *action*: it establishes the friendship between philosopher and king, without which the happy end would not be brought about.

A number of strange occurrences: *natural* miracles (cf. I 1).

The *real* action is the fate of the hero, Nathan. What happens to *him*? The first scene exhibits the strength of Nathan's *love* of his foster-daughter (Lessing—Malchen[8]). Cf. 227a, top[9] and 227b.[10] The last scene: Nathan seems to become the father of the Knight as well; but he is, as it were, pushed aside by Saladin and Sittah: he *does* lose his child.

He owes that child, not to nature or chance, but to *virtue* (184b bottom[11])—virtue is *not* rewarded on earth.

What about the statement to the contrary (189a[12])? The context: Nathan's prudent medicines. See also 187a[13] in the middle.

Everything depends on our seeing the *difference* between Nathan and the happy family (Saladin, Sittah, Knight, and Recha), on our seeing the *peculiar* character of Nathan.

The perfectly happy end would have been possible *without* Nathan's discussion with Saladin: the Knight is indifferent to religion independently of Nathan (II 5)—Saladin and Sittah are no fanatic people—Recha is so much in love with the Knight that she would have married him anyway.

"Nathan the Wise"—sounds like the name of a king or of a prince (cf. 194b[14]) (—Friedrich der Weise[15]—Friedrich der Grosse[16])

But why Nathan?

The *prophet* Nathan—the prophet who admonished, and reprimanded, those oriental despots David and Solomon (2 Sam 7,12; 1 Kings 1).

— The *wise* Nathan—he does *not* reprimand Saladin—191a[17] (I 3)—his *prudence.*

— Patriarch → the fight between Pope and Emperor > cf. Jacobi's "Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat [Something Lessing Said]."[18]

The inferiority of the "family" at the end as compared with Nathan:

the *child* p[19] etc.)
the *young* Knight—he is rash (cf. 232b[20])
the *confused* Saladin, the bad chess player
the calculating *woman* Sittah.

Only these 4 people, and *not* Nathan, prove to be blood-relatives—this alone shows that the *natural kinship* of all men is *not* considered by Lessing the last word. It is not without good reason that the solution given in the *Nathan*, is so different from that of the *Tempest*: not upon an island, but in the "holy land." The relation of the "ideal" to "reality" is much more directly a *question* in the *Nathan*.

The deeper problem: it is perfectly understandable that Saladin, Knight and Recha, in order to prove to be relatives, ought not to be married—but why is Sittah necessary? Nathan and the 4 others have *no prospect of progeny* → closed and open society, the open society is impossible. Cf. 206b.[21]

The basic miracles: Recha's life is a *gift* of the Knight—the life of the Knight is a *gift* of the Sultan

everyone's life is a *gift* of his father 203b,[22] 204a top,[23] 223b bottom[24]
→ the radical *dependence* of man on man—the radical *servitude* of man to man

The significance of the *Dervish* (206a[25])
Nathan's *prudence*: his manner of teaching (with what ease does he tell stories …). 186b,[26] 187a.[27]

The conflict of Nathan with the Knight: 217b top, 218b top.

Der Tempelherr—der deutsche Bär [the German bear] (195b top[28])—cf. Tellheim[29]—"der menschliche Held [the human hero]" (*Laocoon* IV (10b top))[30] distinguished from, and opposed to, the *Stoic* (the *ideal* philosopher), but also from the *prudent* philosopher Nathan: who is not a "German," but very, very strange: a "Jew."

Nathan der Weise II

The 3 *central* scenes (III 5–7)[31]—in the center of which is the *only monologue* of Nathan.

Saladin has been described in II 1–2 (cf. 205b middle[32]) as a *bad* chess player—Nathan is a *good* chess player (199b[33]).

234a bottom and b top[34]

Saladin believes in vox populi vox Dei [the voice of the people (is) the voice of God]

Saladin's *question*: "What *faith*, what *law* has convinced you?"

The story of the *ring*—what is a ring? a thing which is highly valuable; not easy to destroy or to break; very close to the body, to the naked skin—surrounding it, covering a part of it; an ornament, and not a utensil; an ornament to which a very great usefulness is *ascribed*; *inherited*; an *artificial* thing.

(cf. the comparison of revelation to *chiro*mancy—Hempel XV 267f.[35])

(cf. the explanation of sceptres in *Laocoon* XVI[36])

What Nathan says to begin with, is not much: two rings are forged, only one is genuine—this corresponds to what all Jews, Christians, and Muslims say—he diverges from that view only by saying that it is *almost* impossible to detect the right belief (212a[37]).

(The father = the God of the revealed religions: he loves his sons according to their obedience to him (211b[38])).

He goes one step further: he, Nathan, does not dare to make a distinction between the 3 rings—for *God* made them undistinguishable.

They cannot be distinguished, they are identical, as far as their *reasons* are concerned—they are based on history, on tradition, on faith: everyone must trust most *his* tradition, *his* father (212a[39]).

The Judge does not give his *sentence*, he merely gives his *advice*—he states his sentence surreptitiously: all three rings are not genuine—his *advice* is that each seek to prove the genuine character of his ring by *good actions*, good morality. The sentence will be pronounced by the *Messiah* in 1000 years.

Earlier Draft for the Beginning of a Lecture on "The Political Message of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*"

(General Seminar, New School for Social Research, 1942 or 1943)

Beginning—Many sermons have been preached by liberal rabbis and by liberal ministers, I say nothing of adherents of ethical culture—sermons extolling the lofty message of Lessing's immortal play. I shall not speak of its lofty message, but only of its pedestrian message, its political message. For apart from the fact that I hate to be a bore, I wish to remain within

the boundaries of my competence as far as possible. It is unfortunate for you and even more so for myself, that I have to go beyond these borders on more than one point.

For: The thesis which I am submitting to you in this lecture—to say nothing of the lecture itself—is the product of hours of leisure, not of years of work. It is the thesis, not of [a] scholar, but of an amateur, of a lover. It is uncertain however whether only scholarly work of many years gives a man a right to talk about any subject of more than ephemeral significance; but certain it is that one cannot become a genuine scholar in any field, if one has not been in the first place, and if one does not become again and again, an amateur, a lover. At least potential scholars have the privilege, amounting to a duty, that their leisure alone can justify their work.[40]

Some time ago, I delivered in this seminar a lecture which seemed to some people to reveal an anti-German bias.[41] I am glad to have this opportunity of expressing in a way which, I hope, will not be considered obtrusive, my personal gratitude and my gratitude as a Jew, to a great son of the German nation, to that German whom I happen to love more than any other German, i.e. from whom I learned more than from any other German. That people like myself should avail themselves of opportunities such as these, might well seem to be a duty—in particular in this moment, now extending itself over 10 years, of parting.[42]

When reading, and trying to understand, a work such as the *Nathan*, one ought not to forget—in fact, one cannot forget—for a single moment that the author silently tells us all the time: Tua res agitur: is *thy* case which is under examination.

This means two things: First, one has to apply to oneself the lesson of the *play*—that lesson is, as everyone knows, tolerance and toleration and charity. But the author cannot possibly tell us how we, how each of us, can best apply it in one's own case. Circumstances are decisive in all practical questions, and the circumstances of each of us are different at different times, in different human relations. The translation of the universal principle into a rule sufficient for guidance for an individual situation, this is the practical problem, and this practical problem is *not* solved by the lesson of the play, because the action of the play is of an *idealized* character: that action is as ideal, as unreal as a fairy-tale. There is, however, another lesson, apart from the lesson of the play itself, implied in the play: the lesson of the *author* of the play; by *writing* the *Nathan*, L. shows us how he, this individual, living in these individual circumstances, applied to himself and to his circumstances the universal rule

of tolerance, toleration, and charity. *This* action of the man Lessing, as distinguished from the fairy-tale action of the play, is not ideal nor idealized: it is an actual fact of human experience, hence an *example* which we can try to imitate directly if intelligently. For the thinking reader, at least, the lesson given by the writer is more important than the lesson provided by the characters of the play.

Does this mean that we should have to close the book and study Lessing's life? This would be absurd—for what is Lessing's life except the external conditions for Lessing's thought, and of Lessing's thought we can know practically nothing except for his *books*, and in particular for his *Nathan*. No, we must read and reread the *Nathan*, but we must read it as the work of *Lessing*. This is still very obscure. What I mean is this: We have to consider just one fact of L.'s life, not mentioned at all in the *Nathan*, one fact extraneous to the play itself, which is of decisive importance for the understanding of the play: the fact, I mean, that Lessing was a *Christian*.

Later Draft for the Beginning of a Lecture on "The Political Message of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*"

(General Seminar, New School for Social Research, 1942 or later)

The political message of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise.*

1. The contrast between Lessing's plea for universal religious toleration and the anti-Christian bias of his play.
2. The pro-Jewish bias of the play and its historical reasons.
3. The practical reasons of the pro-Jewish bias: the relation of money and wisdom, or of commerce and open-mindedness.
4. Nathan and the Dervish: the relation between prudent wisdom and imprudent wisdom.
5. Nathan and the Templar: the relation between prudent wisdom and the voice of the heart.
6. Nathan and Saladin: the gulf between the Wise and the enlightened despot.
7. Why does the play not end with a marriage: the limits of tolerance or the nature of political community.

The universal religion of the *Nathan* and L.'s private belief: Introite nam et hic Dii sunt [Enter, for here too are gods].[43] (the *plural.*) The motto of the play: (cf. the change of the motto from Euripides *Ion*[44]).

* * *

The *Nathan* is a plea for mutual toleration of all historical religions, a plea based, not on any particular historical religion, but on universal, rational religion. As regards the different historical religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam—the *Nathan* is strictly speaking neutral. In spite of that fundamental neutrality, however, we observe a definitive anti-Christian bias: the most superior people of the play are a Jew (Nathan) and a Muslim (Dervish), and no Christian reaches their stature. The least sympathetic man: the Patriarch, is a *Christian*. How is that anti-Christian bias, which seems contradictory to L.'s freedom from prejudice, to be accounted for?

a) L. had to choose the most significant *setting* as regards both place and time: the Holy Land—the Age of Faith—the time of the Crusades—at that time, the intellectual superiority of Islam and Judaism to Christianity was a fact: Averroes and Maimonides precede in time Thomas Aquinas.

But this is not a sufficient explanation: Lessing had the poetic freedom to emancipate himself from the historical accidents.

b) L. was a Christian, writing in a Christian country for Christians—a pro-Christian bias was to be expected on all sides. To counteract the pro-Christian bias, it is not enough to speak without any bias—cf. the principle of moral education in *E.N.* II[45]—an anti-Christian bias was called for—L. and his contemporaries had to go through the anti-Christian bias to become truly free from their pro-Christian bias. They had to see Christianity from an anti-Christian angle, from a Jewish or Muslim angle, before they could see it without *any* bias, or before they could see it *philosophically*. (Application to *Merchant of Venice*.) This fact lays a heavy obligation on those interpreters of Lessing who are not Christians—e.g., on those interpreters who happen to be Jews. The *Nathan* has not only a general anti-Christian bias, it has even a pro-Jewish bias (L. was calumniated that he had got money from rich Jews[46]): after all, the hero is a Jew, and Nathan is much more important than the Dervish (so much so that Mr. Bruckner felt himself entitled to omit him altogether from his stage-presentation in the New School).[47] Now, a Jew must be expected to have a pro-Jewish bias if he is not perverted human being—and if he wants to learn anything from L., he must be on his guard exactly against that pro-Jewish bias. There is just the possibility to interpret the *Nathan* as a praise of *the* Jews—hence, the *Nathan* appeals to Jewish self-complacency, which is as natural and as illegitimate as any other self-complacency. Any over-emphasis on the pro-Jewish bias of the *Nathan* is not only a

grave misinterpretation of Lessing's intention but, if done by a Jew, a sign that he has learned *nothing* from L.: *the* attitude of L. toward Christianity must be the model for the attitude of the Jewish interpreter of L. toward Judaism.

I would like to say one more word about this point which you may be inclined to dismiss as merely methodological or moral—because it is not always considered in any discussion bearing on the Jewish question. Jews, I feel, are under a particular obligation not to be self-complacent—self-complacency is the characteristic feature of the Philistine—Jews are not Philistines, in fact, they are enemies of the Philistines since time immemorial: Samson—but they are *neighbors* of the Philistines. Now, *Vayehi beshallach Par'oh* . . . [And it was in Pharaoh's sending-away . . .][48]—Jews are always in danger to prefer the short way through the land of the Philistines to the long way through the desert—sometimes, they succumb to that danger, and then something happens which reminds us, to quote Jeremia—*Zakharti lakh chesed ne'urayikh, veg*[*omer*] [I remember for you[r sake] the kindness/grace of your youth etc.].[49]

Why did L. choose a Jew as the hero of his play?—The particular character of the Jews: why is a Jew the ideal representation of "Wisdom"? The particular *difficulty* for Jews: the Tempelherr's remark on the Jews' responsibility for intolerance (εὐσέβεια [piety] περισσότης[50] [superfluity, excess]): it is particularly *difficult* for Jews—and hence, it is *most convincing* if a Jew can do it. The comedy *The Jews* and J. D. Michaelis' reaction to it.[51] L. knew better: his friendship with Moses Mendelssohn (he was L.'s best friend, in spite of the remarkable difference of intellectual level). More important: Maimonides, the greatest Jew of the Middle Ages, and perhaps of the whole post-Biblical period of Judaism, and Leibniz' judgment on him.[52]

PART IV
NOTE ON *NATHAN*

The *most common* aspect of the Jews: traders, merchants, financiers—*money*—what have *these* things to do with wisdom? Are they not connected rather with *worldly prudence*, not to say with slyness? Or should there be a profound connection between wisdom and prudence? The relation between philosophy (freedom of mind) and trade: Athens vs. Sparta; modern western philosophy vs. monasteries.

Nathan and the Dervish:

> Nathan wise *and* prudent
> the Dervish merely wise.

L.'s teaching is that wisdom and prudence are not separable, that wisdom without prudence is available, but not really wise. (Socrates did not separate from each other wisdom and σωφροσύνη [prudence]).

N.'s wise prudence "in action": his educating Recha etc.

More general remark: the error to identify the teaching of the *Nathan* with Lessing's own belief—cf. Fittbogen[53] and F. H. Jacobi[54] on the relevance of the *Nathan*. Mendelssohn.[55]

L.'s belief: his conversation with Jacobi

— there is no other philosophy than that of Spinoza—[56]

— philosophy is in *no* book—*not* in the *Ethics*—[57]

non ridere, nec lugere, non indulgere, sed intelligere [neither to laugh nor to cry nor to pander, but to understand].[58]

Then raise from practice to speculation.

Application to the lesson of the *Nathan:* tolerance—to be considered in the light of the action: the happy family—but no prospect of progeny—"Ernst und Falk" on *the* political problem: (you can be a left-wing Tory or a right-wing Whig—but no wise man will be a right-wing Tory or a left-wing Whig.)[59]

Lessing's alleged sentimentality—

MM's [Moses Mendelssohn's] remarks on his coldness

(see laments of MM in Kayserling[60]).

Notes

1. On Strauss's lectures in the General Seminar, see Hannes Kerber, "'Jerusalem and Athens' in America: On the Biographical Background of Leo Strauss's Four Eponymous Lectures from 1946, 1950, and 1967, and an Abandoned Book Project from 1956/1957," in *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 29, no. 1 (2022), 90–132, especially 95–100 and 124–26.

2. In his private notes, Strauss uses "p.m." (penes me, Latin for "in my possession") to refer to books from his personal library.

3. "Ab." is short for "Absatz" (German for "paragraph").

4. Strauss refers to sections 2, 11, and 12 in Lessing's *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*. The edition he uses is *Gesammelte Werke in zwei Bänden* (Leipzig: Göschen'sche Verlagshandlung, 1855), vol. 2.

5. The passage from Lessing's *Leibniz on Eternal Punishments* reads in full: "[Leibniz] did no more and no less than what all the ancient philosophers used to do in their *exoteric* presentation. He displayed a prudence which our most recent philosophers have, of course, become far too wise to employ. He willingly set his own system aside and tried to lead each individual along the path to truth on which he found him."

6. The rumor of a treatise entitled *Of the Three Impostors* surfaced in the thirteenth century and circulated through the eighteenth century. The treatise was said to deny the truth of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, with the "impostors" of the title being Jesus, Moses, and Muhammad. See Leo Strauss to Jacob Klein, February 16, 1938, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), vol. 3, 549: "You know the rumor (*Rede*) of the book *De tribus impostoribus*, which the bibliographers are looking for in vain: supposedly, it was written by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, by Averroes etc. etc., but it does not exist. (The book by the same title was written by the end of the 17th century.) Well—one does not find 'De tribus impostoribus' for the simple reason that one is *searching* for it while it is in everyone's hands: it is the *Moreh* (resp. the works of Averroes and Farabi, not to speak of other surprises which are possible in this regard—I do not want to ask too much of my reluctant pen)."

7. See below, note 52.

8. Lessing was strongly attached to his stepdaughter Amalie "Malchen" König, who, aged sixteen when her mother (and Lessing's wife) Eva died in childbed in 1778, took over his household. Lessing repeatedly denied rumors that he intended to marry her after his wife had passed away.

9. "And although sevenfold love soon bound me to this solitary foreign girl; although the thought kills me that in her I am to lose my seven sons once more:—if providence demands her out of my hands again—I shall obey." (IV/7, v. 694–99.)

10. God! if after all I could still keep the girl and purchase such a son-in-law for myself besides!" (IV/7, v. 740.)

11. "Everything else I that own, nature and fortune have allotted to me. This possession alone I owe to virtue." (I/1, v. 33–36.)

12. "For God rewards a good done here, yet here too. " (I/2, v. 358–359)

13. "Nathan: Yet if only a human — a human as nature grants them every day provided you this service: he'd have to be an angel for you. He'd have to be and would be. Recha: Not an angel in that way; no! a real one; he was for certain a real one! — Haven't you, you yourself taught me it's a possibility that angels do exist, that God could also do miracles to benefit those who love him? I do love him. Nathan: And he loves you; and does in every hour miracles for you and those like you; yes, did them for you already from all eternity. Recha: I like hearing that. Nathan: What? Since it would sound totally natural,

totally mundane, if an actual Templar had rescued you: should it be therefore any less a miracle? — The greatest of miracles is that true and genuine miracles can become and should become so mundane for us. But for this general miracle, a thinking person would hardly ever have dubbed miracle what only children should so call, who, gawking, follow only the most unusual, only the most novel." (I/2, v. 201–24.)

14. "Daja: His people worship him as a prince. But that they call him the wise Nathan, and not instead the rich one, has often surprised me. Knight Templar: To his nation rich and wise are possibly the same. Daja: But above all they should have called him the good one. For you cannot imagine at all how good he is." (I/6, v. 738–43.)

15. Frederick III (1463–1525), Elector of Saxony, known as "Frederick the Wise."

16. Frederick II (1712–1786), King of Prussia, known as "Frederick the Great."

17. "Enough! stop! ... Al-Hafi, make sure to go back into your desert soon. I'd fear precisely among humans you might forget to be a human." (I/3, v. 490, 496–99.)

18. In *Something Lessing Said: A Commentary on Journeys of the Popes* (1782), Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi reports the following anecdote: "This I heard Lessing say: What Febronius and his followers maintained was shameless flattery of the princes; for all their reasons against the rights of the pope were either no reasons or else twice and thrice as applicable to the princes themselves. Everyone was capable of grasping this; and the fact that no one among the many whose urgent business it would be to point this out has yet said so publicly, with all the conciseness and sharpness such an issue permits and deserves, was odd enough and an extremely bad sign."

19. "Recha: My father, if I'm wrong, you know I don't like being wrong. Nathan: You rather do like being taught." (I/2, v. 275–77.)

20. Reference to V/5, v. 311–49.

21. Reference to III/1, v. 16–64.

22. Reference to II/5, v. 504—II/6, v. 541.

23. "It is not enough that I still exist by his behest, that I still live because of his will: now I must also await him to tell me according to whose will I have to live." (II/7, v. 577–80.)

24. "What right would Nathan have to her, if he is not her father? The one who saved her life becomes the sole heir to the rights of him who gave it to her." (IV/5, v. 462–66.)

25. Reference to II/9, v. 713—III/1, v. 16.

26. Reference to I/1, v. 144—I/2, v. 187.

27. Reference to I/2, v. 188–227.

28. "Then go, you German bear! Go!—And yet I must not lose track of the animal." (I/6, v. 786f.)

29. Major von Tellheim is one of the two key figures in Lessing's 1763/1767 play *Minna von Barnhelm or the Soldiers' Happiness*.

30. "While the lamentations are those of a human being, the actions are those of a hero. Both combined make up the human hero, who is neither womanish nor hardened, but appears at one moment the former, at another time the latter, just as nature demands him to be at one time, and principles and duty demand at another. He is the highest being that wisdom could conceive and art could imitate." The page number refers to the edition mentioned in note 4.

31. In a footnote at the bottom of the page, LS corrects himself: "Not quite correct—the 3rd act has *10* scenes—the *two central* scenes (III 5–6) *precede* the scene where the story of the rings is told (= III 7)."

32. "Al-Hafi: He heeds me not at all, and with contempt throws the whole game into clumps. Nathan: Is that possible? Al-Hafi: And says: he'd simply want it to be checkmate, he'd want! You call that playing? Nathan: Hardly so, you call it gaming the game." (II/9, v. 682–86)

33. "He possesses understanding; he knows how to live; he plays chess well." (II/2, v. 276.)

34. Reference to V/6, v. 400–466.

35. At the end of the first section of his *Counter-Propositions* to the "Fragments by an Unnamed Author," Lessing compares theological and chiromantic proofs: "It is at least certain that the transition from purely rational truths to revealed ones is enormously disagreeable if one has become spoiled by the precise as well as comprehensible proofs of the former. One then expects and demands the *same* clarity and comprehensibility from the proofs of the latter, and one holds anything not proved *in the same way* not to be proved *at all*. I recall here what happened to me in my youth. I wanted to study mathematics, and I was given the elder Sturm's *Tables*, in which chiromancy was still included among the mathematical sciences. When I encountered this, I did not know what hit me. My limited understanding [*Verstand*] suddenly ceased to operate altogether; and although an art which promised to acquaint me with my future destiny held no small attraction for me, I felt as if I had exchanged a pleasant wine for insipid sugar-water when I transferred my attention to it from geometry. I did not know what to think of a man who had combined two such disparate things in *one* book; I took my leave of him and sought another teacher instead. But had I been obliged to regard this man as infallible, the question-begging principles of chiromancy, whose arbitrariness was so apparent to me, would have filled me with fear and distrust toward those mathematical truths which were so comfortable to my understanding [*Verstand*], even though I had grasped some of them only by memory. I could not possibly have regarded them both, geometry, and chiromancy, as equally certain; but I might well have come to regard chiromancy and geometry as equally uncertain. I hardly think it worth the effort to repudiate the suspicion that I am trying to insinuate that the proofs of revelation and the proofs of chiromancy are of equal weight. They are, of course, not of equal weight; their specific weights are unequivocally incommensurable; but both proofs nevertheless belong to one and the same class, both are based on testimonies

and on empirical propositions. And the contrast between the strongest proofs of this kind and proofs which flow from the nature of things is so striking that every art designed to reduce this striking divergence and to smooth it out by introducing all kinds of intermediate gradations is futile."

36. In section XVI of his *Laocoon*, Lessing gives the following explanation of Homer's account of Agamemnon's shield (*Iliad* 2.101–108): "I should not be surprised to discover that one of the ancient commentators of Homer had admired this passage as the most perfect allegory of the origin, the progress, the establishment and the hereditary succession of royal might [*Gewalt*] among men. Admittedly, I should smile if I were to read that the maker of the shield, Vulcan, (as the fire, as that which is most necessary for the preservation of man) points to the elimination of wants as such which moved the first men to subject themselves to one individual;—that the first king was a son of Time (*Zeus Kroniōn*), a venerable old man, who wished to share his power [*Macht*] with, or wholly confer it to, an eloquent, prudent man, a Mercury (*Diaktorōi Argeiphontēi*);—that the prudent orator relinquished his supreme might [*Gewalt*] to the bravest warrior (*Pelopi plēxippōi*), when the young state was threatened by foreign enemies;—that the brave warrior, after subduing the enemies and securing the kingdom, passed it on to his son, who, being a peaceful ruler, as a benevolent shepherd of his peoples (*poimēn laōn*), made them acquainted with luxury and abundance, whereby after his death the wealthiest of his relatives (*poluarni thuestēi*) had the way open to acquire by means of presents and bribes that which hitherto confidence had conferred and which merit had considered more a burden than an honor, and to secure it forever as a kind of purchased estate of his family. I should smile, but I would, nonetheless, be confirmed in my esteem for the poet, from whom so much can be loaned."

37. Reference to III/7, v. 432–76.

38. "So now this ring came, from son to son, ultimately to a father of three sons, all three of whom were equally obedient to him, all three of whom he consequently could not help loving equally." (III/7, v. 413–16.)

39. "Now whose trust and faith does one then least raise doubt about? Isn't it of those who are one's own? isn't it of those whose blood we are? isn't it of those who've given us tokens of their love from childhood on? who never have deceived us except where being deceived was more salutary for us? — How can I believe my fathers less than you do yours? Or the reverse. — Can I demand of you that you give the lie to your forebears in order not to contradict mine?" (III/7, v. 463–73.)

40. Cf. Leo Strauss, "Eine Erinnerung an Lessing," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2nd ed., ed. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013), vol. 2, 607: "The present explanation of Lessing's intentions is the attempt of an amateur, not a scholar; it is the fruit of hours of leisure, not years of labor. It is uncertain whether only years of scholarly labor earn one the right to an amateurish exposition. But certain it is that no one becomes a proper scholar without having been an amateur at first and becoming an amateur over and over again. Scholars in

the making have the obligatory privilege that only their leisure justifies their labor."

41. Strauss here refers to his "German Nihilism" lecture, delivered on February 26, 1941, in the Graduate Faculty's General Seminar. See Leo Strauss, "German Nihilism," ed. David Janssens and Daniel Tanguay, *Interpretation* 26, no. 3 (1999): 353–78, with Wiebke Meier, "Corrections to Leo Strauss, 'German Nihilism,'" *Interpretation* 28, no. 1 (2000), 33–34.

42. Cf. Leo Strauss, "Eine Erinnerung an Lessing," 608: "Besides, the author was not unmindful of the obligation of thanks which is owed by his nation to that great son of the German nation, especially at this moment of parting and of farewell."

43. This is the motto of Lessing's *Nathan*. Lessing consciously misattributes this line to Aulus Gellius ("Apud Gellium"), indicating that he is aware that Aristotle attributes it to Heraclitus (*De partibus animalium*, 645a15–23).

44. For the Greek motto of his unpublished fragment *Bibliolatry*, Lessing makes free use of three verses from Euripides's *Ion*: "Noble, O Christ, is the labor I perform in front of your house to honor the prophetic place."

45. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* probably bk. 2, ch. 1.

46. In *Further Correction of the Tale of 1,000 Ducats, or Judas Iscariot the Second*, Lessing denies the rumor that the Jews of Amsterdam had paid him money to publish the anti-Christian "Fragments by an Unnamed Author."

47. In March 1942, Ferdinand Bruckner's free adaptation of *Nathan the Wise* played eleven times at Erwin Piscator's Studio Theatre at the New School for Social Research. According to the New School's Bulletin (February 16, 1942), this performance was "the first professional performance in English of 'Nathan the Wise.'" It was adopted by the Belasco Theatre on Broadway. In February and March 1944, Piscator staged the same version of Lessing's play again at the Studio Theater.

48. Strauss here quotes the beginning of Exodus 13:17: "And it was in Pharaoh's sending-away [the people, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines though it was near . . .]."

49. Strauss here quotes the ninth through twelfth Hebrew words of Jeremiah 2:2

50. Strauss's 1948 notebook on Plato's *Euthyphro* revolves around the question whether piety is "περιττόν [superfluous]." See *Leo Strauss on Plato' "Euthyphro": The 1948 Notebook, with Lectures and Critical Writings*, ed. Hannes Kerber and Svetozar Y. Minkov (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023), 49–50, 124, and 127–28.

51. Lessing's one-act *The Jews* attempts, as he himself puts it, "to show virtue to the vulgar in a place where they did not suspect to find it at all." Johann David Michaelis famously faulted the play for a highly improbable presentation of a Jew with an impeccable moral character: "It is indeed not impossible, but all too unlikely that such a noble temperament could have as it were formed itself among a people whose principles, way of life, and education color their dealings with Christians all too noticeably with animosity,

or at least with a decided cold-bloodedness against Christians. This implausibility was a hinderance to our pleasure, the more so that we wish this noble and beautiful image had truth and reality to it. But even mediocre virtue and honesty are so rarely to be found among this people that the few examples cannot diminish as much as one would like the hatred felt against them." *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* 70 (June 13, 1754), 621.

52. On the first sheet of his extensive excerpts from Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, Leibniz notes: *Egregium video esse librum Rabbi Mosis Maimonidis, qui inscribitur Doctor perplexorum, et magis philosophicum quam putaram, dignumque adeo lectione attenta. Fuit in philosophia, mathematicis, medica arte, denique sacrae scripturae intelligentia insignis*. [. . .] *Profitetur se parabolarum legis veram intelligentiam aperire; timuisse scriber quia, inquit, talia sunt de quibus nullus ex gente nostra in hac captivitate quicquam scripsit hactenus*. ("I find the book by Rabbi Moses Maimonides, entitled *Guide of the Perplexed*, is excellent and more philosophical than I had suspected, worthy of attentive reading. He was distinguished in philosophy, mathematics, the medical art, and finally his understanding of Sacred Scripture. [. . .] He promises to reveal the true understanding of the parables of the law. 'I fear to write,' he says, 'since these are things of which none of our people in captivity has hitherto written anything.'") Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften* (Berlin: Berlin Akademie, 2006), vol. 4, pt. A, no. 424, 2484.

53. See Gottfried Fittbogen, *Die Religion Lessings* (Leipzig: 1923), 148–82.

54. In *Against Mendelssohn's Imputations Regarding the Letters on the Doctrine of Spinoza* (1786), Jacobi explains his interpretation of *Nathan the Wise*: "The intention [*Absicht*] of this poem is so clear as day that it comes to every reader on its own; the intention to make suspect the spirit [*Geist*] of all revelation and present every system of religion, without any distinction, *as a system* in a hateful light."

55. In his *Morning Hours or Lectures on God's Existence* (Berlin: 1786), 268f., Mendelssohn interprets *Nathan the Wise* as "a kind of *Anti-Candide*" and a "glorious paean in praise of providence (*Lobgedicht auf die Vorsehung*)" (*Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes*, 129f.).

56. In the anonymously published *On Spinoza's Doctrine in Letters to Mister Moses Mendelssohn* (1785), Jacobi reports that Lessing told him in 1780: "There is no other philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza."

57. Jacobi records the following conversation in *On Spinoza's Doctrine*: "Leßing: Then we shall not fall out over our credo. I: Let's not do that in any case. But my credo is not to be found in Spinoza. Leßing: I hope it's not to be found in any book. I. Not just that. I believe in an intelligent personal cause of the world. Leßing. Oh, so much the better! Then I must get to hear something quite new."

58. Spinoza declares in the *Political Treatise* (I, 4, 10, 2) that he carefully attempted "neither to laugh at nor cry about nor to despise, but to understand human actions (*humanas actiones non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere*)."

59. At the beginning of the second dialogue of Lessing's *Ernst and Falk: Dialogues for Freemasons*, the freemason Falk calls himself a "heretical (*kätzerischer*) freemason."

60. See, for example, Meyer Kayserling, *Moses Mendelssohn: Sein Leben und Wirken*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1888), 55, 263, 366, 368, and 445.

EDITED AND TRANSCRIBED BY SVETOZAR Y. MINKOV

Transcript 2.1

LEO STRAUSS, ON THE PLAN OF THE *KUZARI* (C. 1941–1942)

Editorial note: The following is the transcript of notes on seven sheets found in Leo Strauss Papers, Box 16, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. The first two transcripts are from recto and verso of a single sheet (complemented with the transcript of a separate sheet as identified in the notes) and the other series of notes are transcribed from five other separate sheets. Additions are all indicated by angle brackets. Strauss's underlinings have been replaced with italics.

[Recto]
Plan of the *Cuzari*
I The conversion to Judaism: the Cuzari as a גוי <goy=gentile>

1) Jewish chronology proves beginning of the world,
   i.e. of the *present* world. I 11–48, and –67.
2) [This might be held on the basis of Epicureanism:]
3) Proof of the truth of revelation by *miracles* I 67–91.
4) Israel's greatness I 92 – end.

{ Plan of I 11 – end.

1. The right method of arguing I 11–25.
2. The election of Israel integrated into the cosmological scheme (the hierarchy of beings) I 26–43.
3. The reliability of the Jewish tradition I 44–59.
4. The tradition of India and of the philosophers I 60–67.

5. How is it possible that God speaks to man? Indirect proof: by rejection of the concept of "nature" I 68-79.
6. The history of the Jewish sharī'a I 80–87.
7. The anthropomorphism of the Jews I 88–91.
8. The disobedience of the Jews I 92.

Question: does the Cuzari raise again the question of how God could talk to men? In II 5: he raised question of the divine *will*.}[1]

II–IV *Institutiones religionis Judaicae: the Cuzari as an Epicurean Jew.* (cf. Haggadah: why do *you* celebrate the Pessach: the question of the רשע {resha, evil})

a) *Hebraic* questions = *Language* [cf. II 1end and 81]

    1. *Names and attributes* of God. II 2–8.
    2. The *cruelty* of God II 9–25.
    3. The *people* of God II 25.

Hebrew quotations seem to start with II.[2]

b) The pious man III 1–22.
c) The Karaites: the tradition III 23–74 }[3] [= *Law*]
d) Names of God IV 1–24 [= *Roots* of the Law]
e) The natural sciences IV 25 – end. }[4]

"*Science*" [cf. II 4 end with IV, II 85 & 15] But: II 28, 58, 63 ff., III 32 & context. 39 (190, 191 H.)] cf. IV 15 beg. (IV 5–14: excursus) *the Cuzari as full-fledged Jew* (from IV 26).[5]

V The Kalām

α) the physical-philosophical structure of theology with occasional criticism of philosophy V 1–14.
β) The Kalām-theology V 15–19.
γ) The practical answers to theology ("branch") V 19–20.

———

Plan in II 81:

1) Language (= II)
2) The pious man (=III)
3) Karaites (=III)

4) Roots of opinions & beliefs = IV 1–24
5) The ancient sciences which remained with the Jews = IV 26–31

Plan in III 74:[6]

1) —{same as in II 81}
2) —{same as in II 81}
3) {same as in II 81}
4) names of God
5) Jewish sciences.

[Verso]
Numbers

Cuzari consists of 5 books and of 331 sections—without the חתימה <khātima = conclusion>, it consists of 323 sections: *19 × 17*

Dialogue between Cuzari and חבר <ḥibr/habr = scholar/sage>—I 11 – V end = 321 sections = *3 × 107*

107 = number of sections of the "Jewish" part of I

Hence:

A. I 11 – 117.
B. II 1 – III 26—*see* III 26!
C. III 27 – V end.

Middle of the whole: sect. 166 = II 49—philosophers vs. sharī'a

Middle of the whole without חתימה <khātima=conclusion> : sect. 162 = II 45—question of Jewish asceticism—cf. IV 18.

Middle of whole Jewish part (= 171)—II 54—the Jews the central fact in the history of human thought.

Middle of Jewish part without חתימה <khātima=conclusion> = *157* = II 40

[Separate sheet]
The *Cuzari* is, not a work of philosophy, but a work of Kalām, and even of an extremely anti-theoretical and fideistic type of Kalām (p. 5f.).[7]

Yet, he corrects the (Karaite) Kalām by basing it on physics (V 2).

Philosophers are so indifferent to religion that they can join any religion, and hence defend any religion (p. 17): a philosopher can *become* a mutakallim. (cf. *Iḥṣa al-Ulūm* {Alfarabi's *Enumeration of the Sciences*} V.)

A philosopher who happens to adhere to a revealed religion, will soft pedal as regards the fundamental difference between philosophy and

revelation: he will assert the basic agreement between both (he will say that as regards divine *will*, the crucial question, philosophy and revelation agree—cf. V 18 (IX) with I 1 and II 5 f.

[Separate sheet]
The other way round: the Mutakallim asserts the basic agreement between philosophy and revelation—V 18 (IX). He is a harmonizer. But what is the motive of that harmonization? Intellectual cowardice?

The philosopher in person who ought to know philosophy better, asserts the basic *disagreement* between philosophy and revelation (I 1). The חבר <ḥibr/habr = scholar/sage> calls the philosophers mutakallimūn (V 14; cf. V 1) ....

[Separate sheet]
RMbM[8] & Halevi present two typical attitudes of medieval Jews to philosophy: the two most important attitudes.

RMbM: harmony between Judaism and philosophy
Halevi: antagonism between Judaism and philosophy

But things are not as simple as that. Both men are convinced that philosophy as *such* is irreconcilable with Judaism. RMbM admits a higher *degree* of agreement between Judaism and philosophy than does Halevi. RMbM feels that, as matters stand, i.e. owing to the loss of the secret teaching which was caused by the Diaspora, there is no choice for the Jewish élite except to study philosophy. Halevi, on the other hand, thinks that precisely the Jewish élite does not need philosophy at all: pure faith, not based on argument, is absolutely superior to any conviction, arrived at by argument.

When discussing Halevi's attitude toward philosophy, people sometimes identify "philosophy" with "thought" or "reasoning." Since Halevi himself is reasoning all the time, they think that he overstated his critique of philosophy. But this view is wrong. We have to distinguish between two kinds of reasoning: philosophic reasoning and reasoning in the service of the law (in particular: Kalām). Cf. V 16—the conclusion to be drawn concerning philosophy ≠ Kalām: philosophy is *dangerous*.

It is dangerous in
its anti-religious character (Socrates—IV 13, V 14).
its a-social character: IV 18 (ascetic.)
its a-moral character: IV 13, 16, 19; I 1 end.

The dangerous nature of philosophy determines the *forms* in which philosophy is presented: the disputation between scholar and philosopher is missing. (Cf. the letter of King Joseph to Hasdai ibn Shaprut—no philosopher, but disputatious!).

philosopher cannot be convinced—but the King can. Why? The King is naturally pious.

The argument is convincing, and is meant to be convincing, for naturally pious people only. Naturally pious ≠ naturally faithful—V 2 beg. The scholar *hopes*, hence doubts, as to whether the King is naturally faithful—but is the King not *evidently* a doubter?—No—it depends on whether his conviction was brought about by argument or by the spark (V 16).

The structure of the book: In I, (no Hebrew quotations) the King is a Gentile; in II-IV the King is a *doubting Jew*; in V, the King is a full-fledged Jew. The decisive moment is IV 26.

The law of the book: the more doubt decreases, the more can the essence of philosophy be divulged: presentation of philosophy given only in V. Cf. the two attitudes toward "intellectual laws"—cf. I 81 with II 47 f.

[Separate sheet]
We have emphasized the *anti-philosophic* attitude of Halevi which distinguishes him so characteristically from RMbM. That attitude is due to the recognition of the *danger* of philosophy. We have seen to what extent that realisation determines the peculiar *form* of the work.

> But Halevi is famous not only for his theoretical defense of Judaism—he is even more famous as a poet, and in particular as the singer of Zion. What is the connection between the teaching of the *Cuzari* and Halevi's Zionism? Zionism, longing for Zion, *active* longing for Zion, *return* to Zion is the necessary conclusion from the Jewish creed. That is to say: one cannot object to Zionism thus understood on any *Jewish* grounds: any objection to *Zionism* is due to unbelief, i.e. to *philosophy*. Poem n. 6[9]

Or, the other way round: Pure and simple faith is not possible but in Palestine—II 22-23 IV 22-23 V 22-23.

> The necessary connection between Judaism and the longing for the return of Jews to Palestine was emphasized equally strong{ly} by RMbM—ה' מלכים <*H' Melakhim*=L' of Kings>[10]— but RMbM laid a great emphasis on the *warlike* character of the Messiah. (Connection with

"philosophy"—loss of political freedom due to our sins—i.e. to idolatry, to astrology—i.e. to neglect of arts of war. Restoration due to military efficiency). In accordance with his general view Halevi rejects this military interpretation. Cf. I 3; I 80-84; I 113; II 1 & 14; IV 21-27

There is then a *certain* point of contact between philosophy and Judaism: pacifism and tolerance.

[Separate sheet]
[The problem bothering the King: it is determined by the conflict between his *revelation* and *philosophy*. His revelation (dream, angel): the relevance of (ceremonial) actions—philosopher denies relevance of actions: God does not care for men, God does not speak to men (I 6, 8, 10).

He meets the Jew—the King touched by philosophy is *disgusted* by the extremely obscurantist unphilosophic answer of the Jew; but he is impressed by the fact that philosophy does not lead to *agreement* which is basic for living together. This is the *first* step.

I 12: "you Jew" I 14: "you Jew". I 28: "you Jew". I 82: "you חבר <ḥibr/habr =scholar/sage>"

II 27: "you חבר <ḥibr/habr =scholar/sage>" II 45 ? (not in Arabic).

The *second* step: the Jewish chronology proves that the world has a beginning—limitation of the proof: I 67!

The *third* step: revelation on Sinai shows *miracles* and hence *creation*. Cf. I 84—

The *fourth* step: the wisdom of Israel—legal regime IV 25-26

—

Poem n. 6—cf. Cuzari II 22end-24.

Notes

1. The transcript between the curly brackets is added from a separate sheet by the editors as it complements the plan of the *Kuzari* described here.

2. In the ms. this sentence appears on the right-hand side of the enumeration (here the enumeration is reproduced above it).

3. This curly bracket in the ms. embraces this line and the one above.

4. This curly bracket in the ms. embraces this line and the one above.

5. In the ms. this whole paragraph appears on the right-hand side of the enumeration (here the enumeration is reproduced above it).

6. The plan of III 74 appears in front of the plan of II 81 in the ms. (here reproduced above it).

7. This and the other references below refer to the following: Jehuda ha-Levi, *Das Buch Kusari des Jehuda ha-Levi: Nach dem hebräischen Texte des Jehuda Ibn-Tibbon*, trans. David Cassel (Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Voigt's Buchhandlung, 1869).

8. Acronym for Moses Maimonides.

9. Possibly "Excursus: Day of Revelation." See *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi: Franz Rosenzweig*, ed. Richard A. Cohen, trans. Thomas Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

10. ה' מלכים is the abbreviation of הלכות מלכים and refers to the last section of the last (14th) book of Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, the proper title of which is "Laws of Kings and Their Wars." Strauss seems to have passages in mind that deal with the nature of the Messiah, and with how the (messianic) return of the Jews to the Land of Israel, their ancestral homeland, will occur in a historical future and in a "naturalistic" fashion. We owe the explanation to Kenneth Hart Green to whom we are grateful. See also Leo Strauss, "Note on Maimonides' Letter on Astrology," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 207; Leo Strauss, "Introductory Essay for Herman Cohen, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 244; *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: JB Metzler, [1997] 2013), 393–436 ("Cohen und Maimuni"); 179–94 ("Der Ort der Vorsehungslehre nach der Ansicht Maimunis," including Strauss's marginal notes ["The Place of the Doctrine of Providence according to Maimonides," trans. Gabriel Bartlett and Svetozar Y. Minkov, *Review of Metaphysics* 57, no. 3, 537–49]); 229–31 (Strauss's marginalia to his Abravanel essay).

Transcript 2.2

LEO STRAUSS, ON THE *KUZARI* (C. 1941–1942)

Editorial note: This is the transcript of a typescript found in Leo Strauss Papers, box 16, folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. In the 1942 Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the American Academy for Jewish Research the following announcement and short summary of Strauss's paper appears:

> Prof. Leo Strauss, "The 'Philosopher' in the Cuzari."
>
> In discussing the *Cuzari*, one has to consider in particular also its form, i.e. the conversational setting of all statements. The most important feature of that setting is the absence of a discussion of philosophy between the philosopher and the Jewish scholar, i.e. between intellectual equals. This setting is in accordance with the technical rules underlying the Platonic dialogues.[1]

Transcribing the Hebrew passages, we have benefited from the help of Yehuda Halper, Alexander Orwin, Philip von Wussow, and detailed comments by Joshua Parens to whom we are grateful. The numbers in the square brackets refer to the page numbers of the typescript. All additions appear in curly brackets. Strauss's underlinings have been replaced with italics.

[1] *The "Philosopher" in the Cuzari*. Paper to be read at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy for Jewish Research on December 28, 1941.

The intention of this paper is to submit to you certain general considerations, or rather a *sketch* of such considerations, concerning Juda

Halevi's concept of philosophy. A study of this topic is necessary for two different, if closely related, reasons. First, the philosophers are one of the most important, if not the most important, group of men *attacked*[2] by Halevi in his Cuzari; thus, one cannot understand his own position before one has understood fully the character of the position which he attacks so passionately. The second reason is of a more general character. The philosophers whom he attacks, are the Islamic Aristotelians. Many books of these philosophers are accessible in print, and even in translations; and yet it cannot be said that[3] agreement exists concerning the most general character of their teaching. As regards the *fundamental* question, the question of their attitude toward *religion*, toward *revealed* religion, we are, so to speak, completely in the dark. The situation is briefly this. Up to about 90[4] years ago, it was generally, and, I think, universally held that Averroes—that Islamic Aristotelian who was most famous in the Western, Christian, Latin world—was an arch-heretic, a radical unbeliever: he was looked upon as the Voltaire of the MA <Middle Ages>. Since Renan, a radical change of orientation has taken place. Asin Palacios went so far as to describe Averroes as the Islamic Thomas Aquinas. To exaggerate a little in order to clarify: present day scholars consider Averroes et hoc genus omne as believing Muslims. To reconcile this view with the traditional one, which is backed by such authorities as Thomas Aquinas and Dante, the suggestion has been made that the Christian scholastics *mis*interpreted the *Islamic* philosophers by interpreting the latter from a *Christian* point of view. It is perfectly true, it is said by some scholars, that a Christian who would approach revelation in the manner of Farabi and Averroes, would have been a heretic, for Christianity has not only a clearly circumscribed dogma, but also a clearly defined magisterial authority interpreting the dogma, but Islam is in these respects fundamentally different from Christianity, and consequently the latitude permitted to philosophers is much greater in Islam than it is in [2] Christianity. This suggestion is, of course, refuted by the fact that not only Christians such as Thomas Aquinas, but also Jews such as Halevi and Maimonides and Muslims such as Ghazzali considered the Islamic Aristotelians, the falāsifa, to be unbelievers. We are then driven back to the contradiction between the characteristically modern view that the falāsifa were believing Muslims, and the traditional view that they were *not*. The modern view is borne out by a very large number of explicit statements of the falāsifa. The traditional view is supported, to begin with, merely by the authority of such men as Ghazzali, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas. The question is

this: why did these medieval authorities not attach any great weight to the orthodox statements of the falāsifa? The answer is simple: evidently they *did not take seriously* these orthodox statements; evidently they read the statements of the falāsifa in a manner different from the manner of the modern scholars (aliter pueri legunt Terentium, aliter Hugo Grotius); they read *between the lines* of the works of the falāsifa. The falāsifa themselves emphasized time and again the necessity to keep the philosophic teaching a secret, this necessity probably had more than one reason; but there is one possible reason, quite naturally not mentioned by the falāsifa, which is particularly evident. If Ghazzali, Halevi, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas were right, if the falāsifa were in radical opposition to revealed religion, to the *sharīʿa,* the open presentation of the philosophic teaching was impossible; for it would have been subject to persecution. If this should be the situation, the works of the orthodox proponents of the philosophic teaching would be of paramount important for the historian. For the orthodox writers were under no compulsion to keep the philosophic teaching secret; on the contrary, they had to *divulge* it in order to show how dangerous it is; they had to draw the philosophers out of their corners in order to fight them; they had to state quite openly the implications, carefully concealed by the philosophers, of the philosophic teaching. It is with some open-mindedness as to this possibility that I propose to make some remarks on the philosophers as presented by Halevi, or rather on what I believe to be the right method of understanding these remarks.

[4] p. 3—has been rewritten[5]

and what he claims to be an *actual* conversation between the king and a Jewish scholar. He points out that the story of the conversation is taken from the histories, and as regards the arguments of the חבר {ḥibr/habr = scholar/sage},[6] he asserts that he had heard them. The introductory remarks end with the sentence: וראיתי לכתוב את הדברים האלה כאשר נפנו {I thought that I should record this argumentation just as it took place}. And he adds: המשכילים יבינו {the intelligent will understand]. Since not much שכל {sechel/sekhel = intellect or intelligence}[7] is required in order to see that the arguments of the חבר have been invented by Halevi (But Halevi *lies* – cf. More's *Utopia*'s proof as to the historicity of the account of Utopia—)[8] , the שכל which he expects us to use, has to be used for understanding the *reason* of that fiction, or, generally speaking, of the *form* of the work. {The preceding paragraph has been crossed out. – ed.}

If the Cuzari presents indeed the defence of Judaism in its ideal setting, the following three questions take on the greatest significance: 1) By what argument does the חבר first *overcome the prejudice* of the king? (I 14). 2) By what argument or arguments does he convince the king of the *truth* of Judaism? (I 48, note 3, 68, 76, 82, 84) 3) When and why does the king finally cease to consider himself a non-Jew? One word on the third question. The conversation of the king is recorded at the beginning of the 2nd book, but throughout the 2nd and 3rd book and the larger part of the 4th book, he continues speaking of "you Jews," "you, the community of the Jews," "your prayers"[9] and so forth. As late as IV 22, he addresses the חבר: יא חבר אל יחוד {O sage/scholar of the Jews} (Hirschfeld 264, 13).[10] Four sections later,[11] in IV 26, however, he quotes from the shaharit-prayer by saying "*we* are saying" How was this change effected? Possibly by the extensive explanation of the *Sepher Yezira* in IV 25. (Cf. II 63. But it is also possible that it was brought about by the explanation of the unwarlike character of the Jewish nation in IV 23; cf. the last word of the philosopher in I 3).

I cannot dwell on this point—important as it is—if we want to enter into the thought of Halevi. I have to hurry to a somewhat more exact discussion of the central thesis that the setting of the Cuzari is the ideal setting for a defence of Judaism. For this thesis is open to a very grave objection. The ideal defence of Judaism would be one which would convince the most exacting, if fair, adversary. Is the king of Cusar really an exacting adversary? However prejudiced against Judaism the king may be: he meets two conditions which make him, so to speak, an … [12]

1 II 23 beg.. 29, 45, 47, 57, 63, 65, 73, 79, 81, III 2, 10, 20, 22, 38, 44, 50 IV 10, 12, (14) 22. Apparently no Hebrew quotations in I (apart from proper names)—but: 50, 22 Hirschfeld. No distinction between Cusari and Jews in V.

2 The אצליכם {near you/in your possession} in IV 24 has probably to be corrected with אצלם {near them / in their possession} ---- ענדהם {ʿinda hum = near them / in their possession}

The Jewish calendar: the מנין {mīnyān = number} convinces him → Sefer Yezirah. But more important: I 62 ff: chronology and creation of the world ≠ eternity of the world. Cf. Wolfson, Proceedings Academy 1941, 110f. {"Hallevi and Maimonides on Design, Chance and Necessity, " *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 11 (1941): 105–63.}

Notes

1. "Annual Report of the Executive Committee," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 12 (1942): vii.

2. Apart from the title, all other passages in the transcript are underlined in pencil by hand.

3. "that" inserted by hand.

4. "80" is corrected to "90" by hand.

5. Page 3 of the typescript is missing.

6. This is the Judeo-Arabic for a non-Muslim religious authority.

7. This is based on what follows right after the passage immediately quoted before: "and the intelligent will understand" (*Daniel* 12:10). As related to a biblical passage, perhaps the less philosophic translation (intelligence) is preferable to the more philosophic one (intellect).

8. The sentence in the parentheses is inserted by hand.

9. Here "1)" is inserted by hand referring to the handwritten footnote at the end of the ms., reproduced at the end of the transcript here.

10. Here "2)" is inserted by hand referring to the handwritten footnote at the end of the ms., reproduced at the end of the transcript here.

11. "Four sections later" is inserted by hand.

12. The rest of the typescript is missing from the archive.

Transcript 3

LEO STRAUSS, "ABRAHAM AND MAIMONIDES" (1953)

Editorial Note: The following document was originally typed by Ralph Lerner, transcribing handwritten notes that he had taken in the course of the evening seminar held on April 30, 1953 at the University of Chicago's Hillel Foundation (Strauss's seminar was the second in a series called "Abraham in the Jewish and Christian Tradition"). The various references that are listed are accurate reproductions of what Mr. Lerner heard Strauss say. But none of the statements should be mistaken for direct quotations; they are all paraphrases. The transcript has been improved with the help of Joshua Parens. Numbers in square brackets refer to the page numbers of the original typescript, and numbers in curly brackets refer to the paragraph numbers of the original typescript. The underlinings in the typescript have been replaced with italics."

[1] 30 April 1953
Abraham and Maimonides
(Hillel Seminar)

{1} Abraham ibn Daud, *Emunah Ramah*, is a reply to Halevi's *Kuzari*. Classes of laws or *miṣvot*: known reasons; unknown reasons (e.g., ritual slaughter, sacrifices), which aim at absolute faith. Full obedience requires acceptance of commandment without knowing the reason (*ʿaqedah*, binding of Isaac). Full obedience is imitation of Abraham's acts.

{2} In letter to the Rabbis of Southern France, RMBM says he has given reasons for *all* the *miṣvot*. This is his last statement. What is the

significance of the Abraham story? In the *Mishneh Torah* (M.T.), M distinguishes *miṣvot sikhliot* (rational commandments) and *miṣvot shimiʿot* (proclaimed commandments). In *More Nebukhim* (M.N.) all laws have knowable reasons.

{3} Traditional religion: it is good that reasons are not given since knowing reasons leads men to argue. (Cf. Solomon on *mishpaṭ ha-melekh*, regulation of the king's way of life.) The real difficulty is sacrifices. M cannot explain every particular difference, but can do so for the principle. Sacrificial law was adaptation to the customs of the times. M depreciates the significance of sacrifices, yet regards it as an integral part of the future in the M.T. If paganism is an eternal danger, protection will still be needed. The "days of the Messiah" is an imperfect period. (Only one statement saying it will last thousands of years.)

{4} M.T., *Hilkhot Yesode Ha-Torah* 7: prophecy of Moses is superior to all those before and after him. This view is borrowed from *Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer* VI; but there, it is preceded by a separate section dealing with prophecy of the patriarchs claiming it is superior in respects. Why did M drop the statement praising patriarchs while preserving praise of Moses? Two ways of understanding Judaism: Mosaic and Abrahamic. M—deliberate Mosaisation of Judaism. According to Ibn Daud, it was not a progress of [2] revelation from Abraham to Moses in the telling of "I shall be what I shall be." In the time of Moses, publicity was needed. But cf. M.N., II 35—Moses was superior. II 39—Why? Moses is the only *legislating* prophet. This bringing of divine law is essential. (Cf. Islamic view of Mohammed as peak.) Law is decisive. M denied the legal character of what is given to Abraham. M.T., *Hilkhot Deʿot* 1 (7): Private instruction needed to bring felicity for himself. Not the function of law. Abraham does not obey in order to improve a social order. M.N., II 39:[1] Abraham uses only argument; he convinces men. No compulsion. Moses brings the law to perfect society. In Abrahamic order, no society is involved. Insofar as law is full perfection of man, role of Moses is raised and that of Abraham is lowered. Abraham's work is preparatory, but not so Moses'. M.T., Hilkhot *ʿAbodah Zarah* 1 (2f.): three stages of mankind—wives and children, priests, few who understand. Work culminates in Moses. Predecessors of Abraham lived in idolatrous community without protesting. Abraham's iconoclasm started the work. (The isolated predecessors account for Aristotle.) Abraham was the first teacher of monotheism. M.T., *Haqdamah*, 1b, motto—"In the name of the Lord, God of the world" (*El ʿolam*); same motto in M.N. from Gen. 21:33. M uses an expression from the Abrahamic story. "God of the Cosmos"?

{5} In one way, emphasis is on legislative prophet as consummation. Therefore Abraham is subordinate. But mottoes indicate that this is not last word. Problem of law: law is superior to instruction of clan. What is the function of law? M.T., *Hilkhot Yesode Ha-Torah* 4 (13): (form of the chapters: 1&2 deal with *maʿaseh merkabah*; 3&4 with *maʿaseh bereshit*; Ezek. 1&10 was regarded as more exalted than Gen. 1-3; M's 1&2 summarize Aristotle's *Metap*.; 3&4 summarize Aristotle's *Phys*.) Four men entered *pardes* (garden; Paradise), but not all could grasp it completely. *I* say it is not proper to walk in paradise without first feeding oneself. Quotes sages: great thing is *maʿaseh merkabah* and small thing is legal discussion. But M says legal discussion [3] is prior; commandments serve immediate purpose of making social life possible. M admits crucial importance of law, but it is not the end; commandments only create a condition so that end can be reached by new and independent effort—*ʿiyyun* (speculation). Most important thing—speculation—was in Abraham. Fulfillment was already in Abraham

{6} (*El ʿolam*=177=*gan ʿeden*. True knowledge is knowledge of *El ʿolam*)

{7} M.N, III 24—*ʿaqedah*. Trials seem to imply finding out how far Abraham will go. Incompatible with omniscience. God knew, but others didn't know. Two lessons: 1) lesson for all men; 2) demonstration of certainty of prophetic vision. How did Abraham receive commandment? Through angel, not directly from God. Every prophetic vision and audition led to action—an act of the imagination, not of reason.

{8} Is Abraham story a symbol or a historical fact? Traditionally, it is a fact. But what about modern theology? M is aware of the theoretical problem involved.

{9} In case of Sodom, Abraham argues. He has no attachment to them. In case of *ʿaqedah*, he has love and does not argue. Unconditional obedience to God does not lead to unconcern with others, but rather self-abnegation. Story of *ʿaqedah* expresses notion of absolute obedience to God's revealed will. But then how can he argue with God? A divination of the unrevealed will of God. This allows him to appeal to God's love. Bible is not simply orthodox. *ʿAqedah* is great symbol of orthodoxy. But the feeling that there is something else too is expressed by mysticism. There is the other element of arguing with God. Abraham is certain that God is merciful and just. It is possible for man to know what God would never ask prior to meeting God.

{10} Cf. Deut.: "This is your wisdom in the eyes of the nations." This is M's justification for a rational explanation of the *miṣvot*. This wisdom

is certainly visible to the wisest pagans. Hence Aristotle's system can be used. Main question: do we know anything as to how we should live without [4] direct religious experience? Buber says no; then there is nothing which can be said before that experience. The Sodom story bears on this and balances the *ʿaqedah*. Miraculous grace of God accounts for Isaac: natural course of events would have led to Abimelech's taking of Sarah; saving of Isaac from the *ʿaqedah* leads to a second birth.

{11} In *gan ʿeden*, Adam has understanding to understand God's command. This is Biblical answer to Aristotle's *Metap*., I 1; man has natural desire to see (with eyes and mind). Not everything, however, is revealed which is God's will; it could be part of man's nature. Cf. Cain's knowing that he had done wrong. There is a reasonable transition from M's way of looking at things to[2] the Bible's. Adam in Paradise was trans-moral; morality is a means to recover that paradise. M denies the rational basis of moral principles. Platonic view—man is a compound of form and matter. Highest perfection of intellectual rational soul is understanding. To understand, man must behave tolerably. Rational proof is possible. But man's body requires society which in turn requires habits. Man's bodily perfection requires virtues too. Yet M does not say that morality is rational. The two moralities overlap but do not coincide. Common-sense morality has two separate roots.

Notes

1. In the typescript "I 39" but this seems to be a typo and "II 39" is meant.
2. "and" in the original typescript.

Transcript 4

LEO STRAUSS, ON SPINOZA (C. 1959)

Editorial note: The following is the transcription of a typescript found in Leo Strauss Papers, Box 18, Folder 17, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. On the basis of the content, one can surmise that this transcript is from the period of Strauss's seminar on Spinoza offered in the autumn quarter of 1959 at the Political Science Department, the University of Chicago. Significantly, this is also the period in which Strauss was working on the autobiographical preface to his 1930 *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*.[1] In this regard, the allusion to the question of *bontà* in Machiavelli and Cicero (p. 4 of the transcript below) is crucial. Strauss refers to the same point in his 1959 course on Cicero.[2] Numbers in the angle brackets refer to the page numbers of the typescript. Additions are all in curly brackets. The underlinings in typescript have been replaced with italics.

<1> Choice of subject: not to repeat what I said in the print: fresh study: I just happen to have studied Spinoza again.

Status of political theory: alleged failure of original theory of democracy (democracy as *the* state of virtue and reason) but: electoral apathy as support of democracy; elites (oligarchies) an indispensable element of democracy. More fundamental: facts ≠ values → political theory = ideology.

What was the meaning of the *original* theory of democracy? Spinoza the first *philosopher* of political democracy.

I) General description of his political philosophy: rejection of all earlier political philosophy—in particular Aristotle Plato—*the*[3] predecessor

praised by him: Machiavelli (politician ≠ philosopher). *Tractatus Politicus* I = *Prince* XV: realistic doctrine, not utopian, men as they are. But also: Hobbes (state of nature, right of nature ≠ law of nature)[4] → by nature right = might. Yet: liberal democracy—how? his Ethics (Stoa)[5] --- but this is too general. His political books. Difficulty: the one which is completed is *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, and his *Tractatus Politicus* incomplete.

II) *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*—biblical context, Christian context. Typical: modern thought secularized biblical thought. But what does secularization mean? Secularization of monasteries—but secularization of thought? Surely a modification: a) corruption b) perfection (cf. Hegel: reconciliation of the gospel with the world ≠ original antithesis) → what is the character of the secularization effected by Spinoza? Is it corruption or perfection?

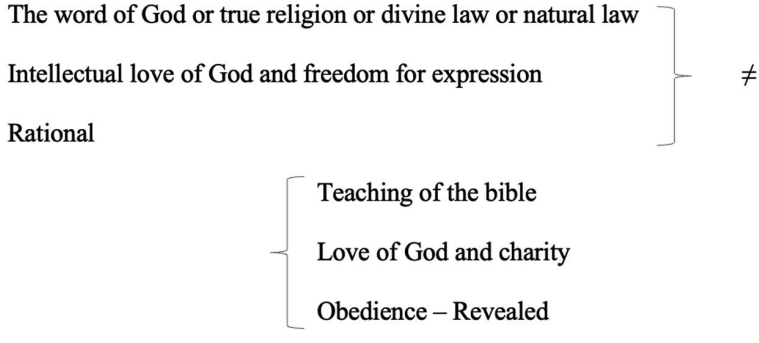
Extreme biblicism (Socinianism): but the bible contains *the* saving truth which is super rational: its revealed and hence supra-rational character guaranteed by miracles. No speculative truth. Only the moral teaching authoritative → God demands only charity → the sin is <2> persecution—the right conduct is tolerance, in particular also for philosophers[6] → *Liberalism* (the right to think what one pleases and to say what one thinks) → everyone equally the judge in speculative matters—no hierarchy (no ecclesiastical authority)—if everyone is autonomous in matters spiritual, all the more in matters temporal → *democracy*.[7] This teaching is theological, based on authority of the bible. That charity is necessary and sufficient condition of salvation, for the bliss is not known to reason. Hence: charity as demanded by bible possible only in the spirit of *obedience*. It is on this ground that Spinoza demands the separation of philosophy from theology: philosophy → speculative truth or simply the truth—theology → charity is a spirit of obedience. Rationality ≠ obedience (*Tractatus Politicus* II 20). Close inspection shows that this simple juxtaposition of philosophy and theology is not possible: philosophy lays claim to the whole realm of truth. On the other hand demand for charity rests on speculative premises and those premises as much a part of bible as command of charity itself → the 7 dogmas in chapter 14 (existence of God, providence etc.): limitation of freedom of thought and speech. But. freedom of *interpretation*[8] of these dogmas --- matter must be *called* "God." And democracy requires a sovereign in the most radical Hobbian sense—charity demands unqualified obedience to sovereign (XIX 22ff.) in matters spiritual as well as temporal—but: the sovereign himself cannot possibly *obey* (→ he cannot possibly be charitable).

III) Biblical teaching confirmed by miracles—but miracles are impossible and/or not knowable → revelation is impossible for it is a miracle—God does not have organs of speech → no verbal inspiration—<3> one cannot even in strict language speak of God having a *mind*;[9] and Bible does not contain authentic records of revelation (Moses not author of Pentateuch = no authentic record of the alleged miracle of revelation)—and textual difficulties: bible poorly compiled and poorly preserved → bible does not possess any authority. Intervening stage: the moral teaching of bible (= charity) authenticated by moral character of prophets—but this presupposes that moral teaching bible is *true* moral teaching. Yet true moral and political teaching *follows* from true *speculative*[10] principles—and bible sets forth an untrue speculative teaching (providence: God rewards the just and punishes the unjust but in fact one fate meets the just and the unjust; no traces of divine justice are found except where just *men* rule) → the biblical moral teaching ≠ the rational moral teaching. While not being true it is eminently useful—but in what way? E.g. do not resist evil (VII 31-34) only for corrupt societies—"turn the other cheek": incompatible with civil society → need for national religion—hate thine enemy → biblical teaching of some usefulness for private people, for people not engaged in political activity (on the death-bed and in churches): or rather: what Spinoza calls the biblical teaching is useful as long as the authority of the bible is recognized, as a protection against theological persecution.

Clearest formulation of Spinoza's position is supplied by an equation which he first suggests and then retracts:

No charity proper: charity proper (to love the other like oneself) is impossible. But even if it were possible it would be possible only <4> for

Figure 1. A diagram of Spinoza's equation. Source: Created by the author.


The word of God or true religion or divine law or natural law
Intellectual love of God and freedom for expression
Rational
≠
Teaching of the bible
Love of God and charity
Obedience – Revealed

a few, it would be of no political significance—it has validity only on the deathbed and in churches (*Tractatus Politicus* I 5)—it is an untrue and misleading teaching (= Machiavelli)

Summary: Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* teaching a secularized version of the bible which consciously falsifies the bible—it presents a break with the bible in the disguise of a perfection of the bible—a conscious transformation of biblical teaching or use of biblical teaching for non-biblical ends. Cooperates with sincere simpletons.

The doctrine that man can achieve his bliss by charity is in Spinoza a *kalon pseudos* {noble lie} in the Platonic sense. Fundamental kinship with Plato: the divine or natural law → intellectual love of God—but this a preserve[11] of the few (V 35-36, 40, 44). Natural inequality → *contempt for the vulgar*[12] [frequently plebs in derogatory meaning (IV 35; XVII 44, 103; XVIII 11, 23, 25; XIX 40; XX 8, 21, 31, 33, 42; but: *Tractatus Politicus* VII 27)][13] → *destruction of the base of democracy*[14] → contempt for politics: the rational life possible in every society (XVI 34n.) (government of the solitary: divine law has nothing to do with human laws. [*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* IV]).[15]

Difference between Plato's and Spinoza's kalon pseudos {noble lie in Greek – ed.}: social hierarchy =[16] natural hierarchy—but more simply *Phaedo* 82b justice and moderation =[17] the virtues common to all classes in the *Republic* which do not presuppose specific physis {nature} (cf. *bontà* in Machiavelli - Cicero) → moderation replaced by charity (→ "the severe and restrictive virtues"[18] replaced by *humanité*[19]—Burke)

But agreement with Hobbes (justice and charity *De Homine* XIII 9) yet in Hobbes this is serious—for he rejects the theoretical ideal and virtues = means of self-preservation (violent death) → Spinoza more in agreement with Plato than with Hobbes. Agreement with Kant, but in Kant impossibility of *theoria* → supremacy of moral virtue[20] <5> i.e. especially justice (different from happiness).—no esotericism. Difference from Plato in exoteric teaching → difference in esoteric teaching: intellectual love of God the theme of natural law = divine law—but for Spinoza this natural law is only a *human* law, a free human project—there is no natural law which men can transgress—for: no teleology.

IV) Since argument in favor of liberal democracy as hitherto discussed was based on theological teaching, what happens to liberal democracy? Spinoza rejects extreme Platonic suggestion (rule of philosophers and practically no freedom of speech for the non-philosophers) for the reason that the rule of philosophers is impossible (VII 79): the multitude of

non-philosophers will never bow to the philosophers. But that multitude is in need of government, of compulsion, of law; yet it resents compulsion especially if it comes from equals [margin of the typescript: *Politikos* {Plato's *Statesman* – ed.}] (the unreasonable unreasonably regard the reasonable as their equals)—hence either fraudulent presentation of one or a few unreasonable men as superior, as gods or sent by gods, or else democracy—either untrue inequality (rule of priests) or acceptance of the untrue premise of equality—in the former case cooperation of the fraud from above (priestcraft) with the fanaticism of the many (V 20 - 25). Spinoza the *philosopher* rebels against the rule of priests → democracy, itself based on a crude doxa the only alternative to rule of priests open or disguised.

V) This is very sweeping: what about a strictly secular monarchy of oligarchy? Spinoza himself presents (*Tractatus Politicus*) what he regards as the best form of monarchy which is characterized by absence of established religion. He implies: a *republic* requires established religion and he indicates that if that religion is not indigenous (like the pagan state religions) but imported (like Christianity) <6> the teachers of that religion possess an independent authority dangerous to that of sovereign. (XVIII 25, XIX 29) → an indigenous established religion in oligarchic republic (limitation of freedom of speech) is a valid alternative to the rule of priests.

Spinoza disregards these possibilities for the following reasons: monarchies inferior to good republics; indigenous religion in republic out of the question now: one has to accept imported religion as a fact—by giving everyone the right to interpret the bible as he sees fit one prevents the rule of priests → the sufficient reason for democracy is *not* that it is the only alternative to the rule of priests. Spinoza's indication that democracy is the only alternative to the rule of priests foreshadows the demand for universal enlightenment as the basis of sound political order. But while he tends in this direction, he does not go so far: he is held back by the contemplative ideal (→ gulf between wise and vulgar). Cf. in this context Spinoza's Baconianism (Descartes) re science.

VI) The philosophic or the purely rational doctrine in the *Tractatus Politicus* (also in parts of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*). Gulf between wise and vulgar—but: liberal democracy → Spinoza must have found a common ground for the wise and the vulgar (*Tractatus Politicus* I 7). Politics quest for *universal* laws ≠ traditional *lex naturalis* which is inapplicable, not realistic—universal laws which man cannot transgress—laws of *behavior*

(≠ duties derived from telos). Yet radical difference between behavior of the wise and behavior of the vulgar, between the law of reason and the law of irrational appetite → Spinoza prefers the latter (for:[21] "realism") but then doctrine not universal → can there be universal laws of behavior? Madmen.

VII) Basis: right = might—there is no natural law but only natural right—man has by nature the right to everything he pleases—every man equally. But this is true not only of men but of brutes <7> and inanimate beings as well → natural right has no human meaning. Yet not entirely: generally speaking men are stronger, especially if united than all other earthly beings → men can conquer nature (jus in naturam)—the only right on earth which counts is that of men. And: no right which is not backed by force → no rights of men which are not backed by the force of men, by the armed interests of men (≠[22] God) → all right is social right. Spinoza ≠ Hobbes: natural right remains intact → Spinoza's doctrine not legal; civitas is a *res naturalis* (≠[23] artificial body). → democracy: the greatest right of the greatest might =[24] the greatest number (*Tractatus Politicus* VII 18) /if they are enlightened/

VIII) Self-interest induces almost all men to prefer society to the state of nature—the interest in peace and security—those who reject peace and security are both foolish and few → the majority have the right and the might to compel them to submit to society. Everyone has equally the right to peace and security. But man wants more: happiness → right of each to pursue happiness as he sees happiness—this is not compatible with the same right of everyone else, especially if one considers also happiness of afterlife → such right only to the extent to which it is compatible with the same right of everyone else. All men are capable effectively to desire peace and security, at least through compulsion—and peace and security are objectively to the advantage of each—in this respect all men, the wise as well as the unwise, are equal. Peace and security is only the lower part of the highest good but it is a genuine part of it. Let us call that part the universal sub-rational good. It supplies Spinoza with the necessary standard.

IX) To achieve that good, need for government. For the rational insight into the need for society is too weak: need for supporting <8> passions. What reason prescribes can be brought about only by non-reason—general importance: need for coincidence of public interest and private interest in office holders (not counting on virtue and public spirit—cf. Federalists). Availability of religion or superstition, but this a dangerous

means—the remedy: freedom of thought, freedom of speech. Natural right of freedom of speech—for: speech expression of thought, and thought not subject to sovereign—but indirect means (propaganda supra-liminal and sub-liminal). Must be granted because of men's incontinence (XX 8-9). But also: for the sciences and arts; otherwise hypocrisy (26-30). Spinoza tends toward complete freedom of speech: only actions are to be forbidden—but he must admit that certain opinions cannot be tolerated, e.g. anarchism (not atheism)—empirical proof of possibility of freedom of speech: Amsterdam (20–22, 39–42, 46)—yet he submits his book to the judgment of the sovereign. Only reasons of expedience of course—therefore not universally valid—ultimate right of the sovereign to permit or forbid any opinions he sees fit. Spinoza's strongest motive: to counteract the power of religious orthodoxy.

X) As for the form of government, democracy. Strange: contempt for the many—democracy → rule of the *wrath*[25] of the plebs (XVII 23-24, XIX 40 end, XX 33-34)—the mind of the vulgar: XVII 9-10, 14-16—he sides with the aristocratic Sadducees against the plebian Pharisees XVIII 11—plebs almost always a term of contempt → the ruling men must be the more prudent sort. But if the demos is weaned away from the clergy and the kings, if it is brought to see its true interests, it supplies the basis of the best and most rational society → the demos is to be weaned away from the promised goods [note below the page: IV 35, XVII 44, 103; XVIII 11, 23, 28; XIX 40; XX 8, 21, 32, 33, 44—*but: Tractatus Politicus* VII 27] <9> of the thereafter to the solid goods of this life—heaven on *earth*.[26]

The foundation of this: democracy most *natural*—by nature all men are free and equal, for by nature no one is subject to anyone else, for by nature no one is *ordered* towards something → democracy the regime in which natural freedom and equality are preserved to the highest degree (XVI 36, XVII 26, *Tractatus Politicus* VIII 12) → Rousseau who was more convincing than Spinoza because he questioned the value of "the marvels of the intellect."

And: democracy most *rational* (XVI 28-30, 34, XIX 10, *Tractatus Politicus* II 21): a large multitude cannot be united but in what is rational, the passions being divisive—especially: democracy → peace (XVII 74, XVIII 15, 18-19, *Tractatus Politicus* VII 5). Dubious character of the proof of the rationality of demos → Spinoza's notion of a democracy: the actual government not in the hands of the demos: preponderance of the rich, the only ones who have time for public office (to say nothing of the exclusion of servants =[27] workers from citizen rights). Spinoza thinks of a regime in

which the commercial patriciate in fact predominates—not Rome which was a tyranny of a few (XVIII 35)—cf. XVIII 2, *Tractatus Politicus* VII 7, 8.

XI *Tractatus Politicus* X 5-8 a) Mere[28] laws are not good enough: the right spirit—[education to virtue—one form: sumptuary laws] b) No, for laws which can be violated without injury to others are despised; the only effective limitation of human desires is horizontal, not vertical. c) The vices of peace (loss of public spirit, effeminacy) cannot be forbidden directly but only indirectly → the majority must be induced to live, not wisely (this is impossible) but prompted by those passions from which the commonwealth derives great benefit → the rich must be induced to be avaricious: if access to public office is made dependent on wealth—on the other hand no special <10> public honor by statues etc. to anyone. Avarice is of course a vice, and despised and rejected in the *Ethics*—but the motive power of society ≠[29] the motive power of the wise.

"Freedom" at the price of the weakening of true morality. Cf. Kant: moral philosophy teaches that lying is absolutely evil; political philosophy teaches that the basic freedom which one's highest moral duty to uphold, includes freedom of speech =[30] freedom to lie. Both in Spinoza and Kant freedom for the highest is demanded in such a way as to include freedom for the lowest—is the primary motive, as they claim, concern with the highest?

Notes

1. Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965). The preface is also reprinted as Leo Strauss, "Preface to Spinoza's Critique of Religion," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 224–60.

2. Leo Strauss, *1959 Course on Cicero Offered at the University of Chicago*, ed. James H. Nichols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 239.

3. Underline inserted by hand.

4. "e)" inserted by hand.

5. The typescript is corrupt: it reads "how question his Ethics (Stoa)" and "question" is crossed out by hand.

6. "philosophy" is replaced with "philosophers" by hand.

7. Underline inserted by hand.

8. Underline inserted by hand.

9. Underline inserted by hand.

10. Underline inserted by hand.

11. "in presence" crossed out by hand.

12. Underline by hand.

13. Square brackets by hand.
14. Underline by hand.
15. Reference, square brackets, and parenthesis inserted by hand.
16. Equal sign inserted by hand.
17. Equal sign inserted by hand.
18. Scare quotes inserted by hand.
19. Acute accent inserted by hand.
20. “moral virtue” inserted by hand.
21. Colon inserted by hand.
22. Not equal sign inserted by hand.
23. Not equal sign inserted by hand.
24. Equal sign inserted by hand.
25. “wroth” corrected by hand.
26. Underline inserted by hand.
27. Equal sign inserted by hand.
28. “More” corrected to “Mere” by hand.
29. Not equal sign inserted by hand.
30. Equal sign inserted by hand.

Transcript 5.1

LEO STRAUSS, NOTES ON PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* (C. 1959)

Editorial note: This is the transcript of an untitled typescript found in Leo Strauss Papers, box 18, folder 17, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Based on the content one can surmise that these notes were written sometime in 1959, the period when Strauss was teaching his famous course on Plato's *Symposium*, edited by Seth Benardete and published as Leo Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). These notes can be therefore considered a companion piece of that course transcript. Numbers in the curly brackets refer to the page numbers of the typescript. Additions are all indicated by square brackets. The underlinings in the transcript have been replaced with italics.

{1} The proper state of mind in which to approach a Platonic work: not that of a babe in the woods, yet a certain innocence, some sort of virginity. *Monos pros monon* [one alone to one alone]:[1] a judicious disregard of "the results of Platonic research": what we can *know* is ultimately the Corpus Platonicum as it has come down to us from antiquity. That this or that is an *early* dialogue or above all that this or that is a *spurious* dialogue is less certain than that the dialogue in question was regarded as a work of Plato by men who knew Greek better than any classical scholar, to say nothing at present of Plato's school.

3 points to remember when studying any Platonic work: 1) Plato didn't write treatises—"step by step as well as correctly"[2] - but beautiful dialogues, beautiful fictions, beautiful lies. What is the general character of

these beautiful lies? What is *the* beautiful lie? → 2 and 3 2) Logographic necessity—nothing superfluous—everything is meaningful—in the dialogues (≠ the world) there is no *tyche* [chance]—e.g. that Socrates is snub-nosed: so that Aristotle can illustrate by Socrates's snub-nosedness that the ideas are "in matter."[3] 3) No dialogue about the whole—each dialogue deals with a part - the utmost a dialogue can teach is the truth about a part—a partial truth—a half-truth. Every dialogue abstracts from something. If the result of a given dialogue is paradoxical or shocking we ought not to be shocked by it: the paradox will be corrected in other dialogues. For: that is ὀρθή δόξα [orthe doxa = correct opinion]

I) *Symposium*: eros—the *god* eros—the only Platonic dialogue to be devoted to a *god* → *Symposium the* Platonic theology (*Laws* X and *Republic* II belong to a non-theological context). The god chosen for discussion in *the* Platonic dialogue on a god is a little god, {2} a god not worshipped by the city - yet the most plausible god (everyone has *experienced* him). Now, of the only god ever made the theme of a dialogue, *Socrates* says that he is not a god at all but only a demon; and it appears that he is not even a demon, a superhuman willing and thinking being, but = *epithumia* [desire, concupiscence] something which is only *in* mortal animals - which is not self-subsisting.

II) The *theme* of the Symposium is most singular - so is the *title* - the only title of a dialogue which indicates the *occasion*. The only occasion of a dialogue indicated by a title is a *symposion—parresia* [speaking candidly]—*hybris* → *Socrates's hybris*.

Titles: 25 - 7 - 3—*Erastai* the participants → Symposium and Epinomis. Symposium: the Olympian gods are not but there are cosmic gods - Symposium *abstracts* from the cosmic gods [Strauss's note: *Ap. Soc.* 26c-d: S. does not refute the charge that he does not believe in the Olympian gods but refutes the charge that he does not believe in the cosmic gods]: it is atheistic. "Socrates" occurs only in "Apology of Socrates," the *accusation*—not the gods which the city worships = not the Olympian gods. Symposium teaches that Socrates is guilty of that charge - this is Socrates's hybris.

III) Symposium a *narrated* dialogue: 9 of them - 3 narrated by people other than Socrates: Parmenides, Phaedo, Symposium. Parmenides and Phaedo present the *young* Socrates: the *physiologos* who turns to teleology—the whole is altogether good, or beautiful → there are no *ideas* of ugly or base things.

Socrates's speech in the Symposium = report of Diotima's speech—addressed to the *young* Socrates → culminates in the vision of the beautiful

itself. More than that: central of the 7 speeches in the Symposium is that by Aristophanes—who had attacked the *young* Socrates in the Clouds for saying among other things "Zeus is not."

IV) Symposium *doubly* narrated *and* narrated for the *second time*—this is unique—someone had heard that there were erotic speeches {3} at a dinner at which Agathon, Socrates and Alcibiades had participated and that dinner had taken place a short while ago. The reply: Agathon has left Athens years ago—Agathon's absence from Athens *proves* that the exchange of speeches *cannot* have taken place a short while ago; the other fellow did not know that Agathon had left Athens. The reply does not refer to Socrates: Socrates is always in Athens. But what about Alcibiades? Was not Alcibiades *absent* since 415? The argument doesn't make sense if Alcibiades is not in Athens at the time when the conversations are narrated—and: whether or not *Alcibiades* (≠ Agathon) is in Athens, is of course a matter of public and universal knowledge → 407. The dinner itself: 416. Alcibiades had left or deserted Athens in 415: the mutilation of the Hermae and the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries. Phaedrus and Eryximachus involved in that scandal → 3 out of the 7 speakers of the Symposium known to be involved in that scandal. And: in the Symposium a divulgation of the mysteries takes place (Aristophanes and especially Socrates) → Symposium tells the true story of what happened in 416. That story can be told now, in 407, after the reconciliation of Athens and Alcibiades and after the Eleusinian procession could take place again thanks to Alcibiades. Story told originally by Aristodemus who was present: he is the leak from those present to the younger comrades of Socrates, and the emotional Apollodorus is the leak from the Socratics to the outside world. Bottleneck: shows that even now the matter is not entirely public. But the story itself: nothing scandalous - everything was decent, no Black Mass - above all Alcibiades came in when everything was over - and no *Athenian* mysteries but *Mantinean* mysteries. Yet: *Socrates* was the culprit → Socrates's hybris → *Plato's* hybris.

{4} V) The original accusation of Socrates's hybris had been made by a poet, Aristophanes' Clouds - generally, the poets accuse the philosophers of hybris (cf. *Laws* X, *Republic* X) → The Symposium meets this accusation. A tragic poet had won in a tragic contest; Symposium the contest of the victorious tragic poet and Socrates with Dionysus as judge → *Frogs*: contest between 2 tragic poets decided with a view as to how they stand to Alcibiades. Plato's contest with Aristophanes' *Frogs*: *after* the contest between 2 tragic poets, a contest between *all* forms of Athenian wisdom,

rhetoric, medicine, comedy, tragedy, philosophy, in which Alcibiades as Dionysus is the judge. He crowns *Socrates*.

VI) 6 speeches in praise of eros and one speech in praise of Socrates. Uninspired eros subject to something extraneous to it—gain, virtue (= *nomos* [law, convention]), *techne* [art]; inspired: eros sovereign—ugliness, beauty, the good (inspired by Diotima). Alcibiades's speech inspired by wine.

The central speech: Aristophanes—the only one to deal with the most comprehensive theme, the Olympian gods and the cosmic gods. Man originally descended from the cosmic gods (sun, moon and earth) - their shape (round) and somehow their motion (turning around their axis) - had nothing in common with the Olympian gods except their sexuality. This man shares also with brutes but no mating seasons → specific of man and Olympian gods: sexiness. But man was not meant to live in Olympian bliss: no physis [nature] limitation of his sex life but nomos [law, convention] limitations, i.e. prohibition against incest. This nomos imposed on him by the Olympian gods who are not subject to that nomos and who impose it on man not out of love for man but for *their* own profit: domestication of man. {5} Still, through nomos man becomes human → the cause which makes man human must itself be of human shape: the Olympian gods. Original man is split into 2 and thus acquires erect stature - but not for looking up to the cosmic gods: from the Olympian gods' point of view in order to honor and feed them; from men's point of view for the sake of amorous embrace: men received an erect stature so that they could *lie* together. Eros is distinctly human: eros is a desire for remedying the scission effected by Zeus - the countermove to Zeus's move - rebellion against the nomos. (Biblical: the only action in the performance of which one cannot think of God is the sexual act.)[4]

Eros is seeking the other half - but owing to Apollo's blunder the other half remains skinless and perished → *eros can never reach its goal*: it is essentially tragic. Eros is seeking the other half - one's own flesh and blood → eros is essentially *incestuous*; but also: eros is essentially love for one's own - one's own is necessarily distinguished from the alien → eros for the *fatherland*. [Footnote. Since *the* goal of eros is unattainable, *political* life is the best → Alcibiades: both Alcibiades and Aristophanes are bodily handicapped (concerned with the body). Alcibiades agrees with Aristophanes that Socrates is completely unerotic.]

Agathon: eros of the *beautiful* (≠ one's own)

These 2 conceptions of eros are the most important premises of Socrates's speech on eros. That speech: 7 parts (just as Symposium as a whole - 7 speeches) I) how to praise eros = the true rhetoric (corresponds to Phaedrus' speech → Phaedrus) - silence on the base in eros → Socrates abstracts from that. II) Dialogue between Socrates and Agathon. III–VII) = Socrates's speech: eros is neither love of one's own (Aristophanes) nor of the beautiful (Agathon) but of the good. The exposition of this truth is accompanied by silence {6} about gods, no immortality proper, no pederasty. But in the 3 last parts of Socrates's Diotima speech—a) love in procreation = love of *one's own* b) love of eternal glory (especially the poets) = love of *one's own* c) love of the *beautiful* culminating in the vision of the beautiful itself: restoration of these forms of eros (even of pederasty)—but *no* restoration of gods and immortality proper. [Strauss's note: ἔρως [eros] = maternal instinct—no natural inclination toward moral virtue—cf. ἔρως [eros] of φρόνησις [phronesis=prudence] (Phaedrus) ≠ ἔρως of virtue: Xenophon *On Hunting*—cf. Thomas Aquinas.] Massive contradiction: denial that eros is of the beautiful—and the speech culminates in praise of eros of the beautiful. Why that? Eros is of one's own on the one hand and of the beautiful on the other—in both respects it creates the gods, the Olympian gods: 1) beautiful → beautiful beings—of eternal beauty and youth; 2) one's own → ancestors, fatherland, polis [city], dike [justice]—*avenging* gods mediated by thymos [spiritedness] (not mentioned in Symposium). By recognizing the *grounds* of the Olympian gods in eros, by understanding them as *postulates* of eros one becomes free of them—eros thus becomes fully: *natural* eros—The Symposium presents the catharsis of eros. There is another kind of eros → the good = the true → the cosmic gods—this eros is not in the ordinary sense of the word most beautiful, therefore abstracted from in the *praise* of eros.

VII) The context—contest with poets—the poets do *not* purify eros—they abandon themselves to the demands of eros—either of one's own (comic poet) or of the beautiful (tragic poet) but: they believe in the Olympian gods as little as Socrates. What then is the ground of *Socrates's* superiority to the poets both present and absent? Socrates: philosophic presentation of poetry and poetic presentation of philosophy: the poets *might* give a poetic presentation of philosophy but no philosophic presentation of poetry. Socrates can give a disenchanting presentation of poetry and an enchanting {7} presentation of philosophy. The poets are only enchanters: Socrates is also a disenchanter. The poets are *only* inspired

by their madness: Socrates is also sober. We could leave it at that if there were only 1 kind of poetry, but there are 2 kinds, tragedy and comedy; tragedy is enchanting but comedy is disenchanting. *Hen monon sophon* [the one wise thing] wishes and does not wish to be called Zeus[5]—wishes → tragedy, enchanting; does not wish → comedy, disenchanting. The former is higher: Agathon is awake when Aristophanes has already dozed off—but not simply: the technē tragedian [tragedian by art] is also a comedian—the statements cannot be invented. The poet who is both a tragic poet and a comic poet is *Socrates*—but is this true?

The explicit discussion of the poets: they generate the beautiful - works of immortal beauty - but not out of love of the beautiful but for the sake of their eternal fame: love of one's own ≠ Socrates inspired by love of the beautiful and free from love of his own does not produce works of immortal beauty: he does not *write* → Socrates wins the contest with the poets because his love is *pure*.

But *Plato* wrote. Is it possible that Plato who had realized the true standard should have had the baseness so harmlessly to fall short of it? → Socrates *could* not write—he could not *invent*, he was a midwife, barren—but: the 3 kymata [waves] in the *Republic*. Socrates was rhetor - he could make speeches - and therefore he could have written them down. Socrates's rhetoric and its *limitations*: *Gorgias*—exhibitio ad Gorgiam: his success with Polus, his failure with Callicles - he could not write punitive speeches - *therefore* he did not write. He could have written comedies but the highest is {8} not comedy but tragedy concealing comedy. *The* punitive man, the angry man, Thrasymachus → Farabi.[6] Young Socrates ≠ old Socrates = he discovered the *necessity* of the αἰσχρὸν [aischrón = shameful, base] and ἄλογον [álogon = irrational]—the recalcitrance of the political—. The limitation of Socrates: Plato in Syracuse, Xenophon with Cyrus and almost founder of a city - Socrates was not political enough to write - the contest with the poets simply (≠ the poets present at the Banquet) is won only through Plato.

VIII) Alcibiades's speech 1) Socrates a Marsyas - superior to Marsyas—flutes—the religious and tragic effect of "statues of *gods*." Socrates's speeches [Strauss's note: but no reference *to* gods] 2) Socrates as Silenus - his *deeds*: outwardly he is erotic and ignorant - inwardly he is full of contempt for all men, even for Alcibiades, and he is full of knowledge - but Alcibiades did not discover that inward or secret knowledge although he slept with Socrates - he is not even aware of his having missed it - he

only discovered Socrates's sophrosyne [moderation] = hybris. Socrates guilty of hybris but not guilty of corrupting the young - guilty of hybris: the gods worshipped by the city - but this hybris is identical with his sophrosyne: the fact that his eros has been purified or he does not assert what he does not know: cautious-bold. [Strauss's note: ὕβρις—σωφροσύνη [hybris – moderation] → μανία [mania = madness] of σωφρ.—this primary opposition (thought ≠ speech)—this ultimate identity (the μανία of the pre-Socratics)] 3) the Silenus-like character of Socrates's *speeches*: externally ridiculous, internally "statues of *virtue*" - = *comedies*.

Socrates had presented his eros in his speech as love of the beautiful (≠ one's own) - yet silence on eros in the highest stages there → eros *proper* is for living human beings, the young and beautiful ones with whom one can be present in body Antigone v. 1— the eros for the young which is effective through *writings* is alien to him.

Socrates as presented by Alcibiades: Socrates does not love at all—he despises all men—yet he *cares* for men—? because he loves to *be* loved - his eros is only self-love, love of his own - but: love of what is most his own (his soul) and therefore for his soul being best.

{9} Phaedrus ≠ Pausanias the omitted speeches—how to figure them out? → love of gain.

Eryximachus

Aristophanes ≠ Agathon → love of one's own, of something which is outside the lover

Socrates - Alcibiades → Socrates lover of gain → one should distrust the lover: beginning of *Phaedrus*: the Symposium the beginning of the love affair with Phaedrus (also Isocrates only 20 at date of Symposium).[7]

IX) Alcibiades's speech the satyr play → a *tragedy* preceded it a) the tragedy = Alcibiades's betrayal of philosophy, desertion of philosophy which Socrates was helpless to prevent. b) the *Symposium* a tragedy—*Socrates's speech* a tragedy - ?how this possible? punishment presupposes: dike [justice] or *law* - tragedy a nomos [law, convention] (*Laws* 817b) - a unity which is as ennobling as it is spurious. This tragedy = nomos is the poetic presentation of philosophy which culminates in the nomos regarding eros (end of Socrates's speech) (cf. Pausanias's deliberative speech): the purport of the nomos: eros proper → human beings, especially males. The reasoning *leading up* to that nomos is Diotima's = young Socrates - the *conclusion* (= nomos) is all Socrates's - but: the cautious formulation ("not easily a better helper") - the cautious formulation does not justify the

nomos: Socrates is not a legislator. Alcibiades says in effect: Socrates does not honor eros - he transgresses the law which he himself laid down. The alternative to eros as a helper toward philosophy: dike [*justice*] (*Republic*).

Notes

1. An allusion to Plotinus's statement: the "flight of the alone to the alone." See Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.11, 1.6.7, 6.7.34. For Strauss's meaning here, see Leo Strauss, *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse: An Interpretation of the Oeconomicus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), xiii.

2. See Plato, *Symposium* 210e2.

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1037a20-b7.

4. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1152b15–20.

5. Attributed to Heraclitus (Diels–Kranz 22 B 32).

6. See Leo Strauss, "Fârâbî's Plato," in *Louis Ginzberg: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 383, or in *Leo Strauss's Published but Uncollected English Writings:1937–1972*, edited by Steven J. Lenzner and Svetozar Y. Minkov (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press), 97–98.

7. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 278e.

EDITED AND TRANSCRIBED BY SVETOZAR Y. MINKOV

Transcript 5.2

LEO STRAUSS, NOTES ON AGATHON'S SPEECH IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* (C. 1959)

Editorial Note: The following is a transcription of Strauss's notes on Agathon's speech in the *Symposium* that he used in his course on the dialogue in the fall quarter of 1959 at the University of Chicago. The notes are found in Leo Strauss Papers, box 17, folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Like the transcripts 5.1 and 5.3 in this volume, these notes are published here as a supplement to Strauss's class sessions on Agathon as found in Leo Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium*, edited by Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 155–73. The notes here have the benefit of containing detailed references to the text (with the marginal Stephanus numbers), cross-references, underlinings, and other ways of indicating emphasis, the punctuation, and the general flow of how Strauss connected lines of thoughts and consequences, words in the original Greek, additional observations, and so forth. Numbers in the angle brackets refer to the page numbers of the manuscript. Additions are all indicated by curly brackets. The underlinings in the notes have been replaced with italics.

<28> **Agathon's Speech** (194e4-197e8)

194e4 Agathon is the only one who begins with Εγώ {I}: he *is* beautiful & successful and he *knows* that he is beautiful and successful.

<29> 194e4-5 To speak of how one ought to speak is not truly to speak [unless ῥητορική {art of rhetoric} is based on ψυχολογία {psychology}]

194e5-6 Aristophanes had blamed all earlier *human beings*—Agathon only blames all *earlier speakers tonight* → Agathon is not a revolutionary, an iconoclast, for iconoclasm is αἰσχρόν τι {something/somewhat shameful}.

194e6-195a5 For the first time, the *god himself* becomes the theme—not as something merely existing *in* the souls of men etc. but as *self-subsisting*—of *what quality* he is. *Aristophanes* had almost touched upon this (189d3-5): δύναμις {power} of ἔρως {eros} ≠ the human *nature*, not the *nature* of ἔρως → will Agathon discuss the *nature* of ἔρως?

195a1-3: the *philosophic* character of his speech: the universal statement on *every* praise regarding *every* possible thing → the gifts of ἔρως = that of which ἔρως is the *cause*.

195a5-7 the *plan* of his speech

I ἔρως οἷος {qualities of} 1) κάλλιστος {most beautiful} 195a7-196b5 2) ἄριστος {best} (196b5-197b)

II ἔρως as αἰτία {cause} (197a-e)

the *whole* speech of Agathon is characterized by unusually clear *order*—for τάξις {order} is an element of κάλλος {beauty}.

But: he does not raise the *primary* question—of the τί ἐστι {what is} of ἔρως—i.e. quid sit deus {what is a god?}.

His praise of ἔρως is necessarily a *critique of the other gods*: they all are less than perfect regarding beauty and goodness.

195a7-b5 The first subdivision of ἔρως' beauty is his *youthfulness*—proven by the fact that he is always with the young and runs away from the old—but why is he the *youngest* of the gods? He is *wholly* young, young in every respect—*therefore* the *youngest* (god). Cf. "idea" of beauty = αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν {the beautiful itself}— is of course τὸ κάλλιστον {*most* beautiful}.

All other gods are *older* than ἔρως → all other gods are more or less *old*, and hence more or less *ugly*.

195b5 only love of similar for similar: the theme of the pederasts—but not used by *Agathon* for this purpose: he is *not* concerned with defense of pederasty.

195b6-c6 *What* does he grant to Phaedrus? Cf. 180b6-8. But does he grant that ἔρως is *not* in the beloved?—He disagrees with Hesiod & Parmenides—*not with Homer* although Homer too speaks of θεομαχίαι {battles of gods} (*Rep.* 378d3-5): he does {not—ed.}wish to blame Homer (→ d1) [the *oldest poet*: is there not a contrast between the blame of the old γῆρας {oldness} and the praise of Homer?]

Originally, Ἀνάγκη {Necessity} ruled over the gods, now Ἔρως rules (i.e. *not Zeus* is the king of the gods). If the stories told by Hesiod & Parmenides *are* true, ἔρως *vanquished* ἀνάγκη – yet ἔρως is the youngest god: he cannot always have ruled →ἀνάγκη must have ruled [→ the stories told by Hesiod & Parmenides *are* true [→the gods other than ἔρως lack ἀρετή {virtue}. Agathon tacitly opposes Aristophanes who implied that ἀνάγκη is stronger than ἔρως–.

Savage beginnings → progress—i.e. good ≠ old—as Phaedrus implied and no one, not even Aristophanes, contested (ἡ *ἀρχαία* φύσις {the *oldest* nature} is the model)—Agathon contests it (cf. *Legg*. III): the divination of ἀρχή = *τέλος* {*end*}. But Aristophanes contested already the assertion that ἔρως is the oldest god—implicitly → there is a progress of enlightenment, a progress of progress in the speeches: Ἔρως the oldest god; ἔρως younger than the Olympian gods; ἔρως explicitly the youngest god; ἔρως not a god at all.

If ἔρως is the oldest god, ἔρως affects *all* things → all things love: ἔρως is *not* specifically human (→ Eryximachus) ≠ ἔρως is not the oldest god: not all things love (Aristophanes: neither the cosmic gods nor the Olympian gods nor even the brutes) → Agathon in {195}e4-7 and 197a1-3.

195c6-e8 Ἔρως is tender, gentle, delicate.

195c7-d7 the praise of Homer (cf. the silence on Homer in c2)—yet: Homer praised not ἔρως, but Ἄτη {Atë}, the god*dess* of mischief [a) not a male god, but a female god, b) not love, but mischief → Homer conceived of ἔρως as something much *sterner* than Agathon does]. With due euphemism, the elegant (εὐσχήμων) poet Agathon suggests that the *oldest* of all poets could not have done justice to the *youngest* of all gods: only the *youngest* poet who is in his way eternally young, can do this. In the thought of the *ancients*, Ἄτη {Ate}, the daughter of Zeus, occupies the place which in the thought of the *moderns* is occupied by ἔρως: the softening of manners. {Note on the back:> no longer "guilt-ridden" and "fear-ridden" → Agathon transforms Ἄτη into ἔρως—something not-beautiful into something beautiful. ≠ Aristophanes: the limping god Hephaestus who was *deceived* by his wife *alone* of the gods understands ἔρως—ἔτι {besides}, Homer places the softness of Ἄτη only in her *feet*, not in her whole being, as Agathon does (e7). Homer Il. 19.92-94 continues: *βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους* {she who damages/hurts human beings}.

195d7-e8 Another correction of Homer: Ἔρως does not walk on such hard things as heads or skulls.

195e3: souls are the *softest* of beings → e5-6: souls *as souls* are soft, but ἤθη {characters} may be σκληρά {hard}—cf. 196a3—

<30> 195e4-7 Ἔρως does not dwell in the souls of *all gods* and men—he does not dwell in the souls of the hard or harsh gods—yet which god is harder and harsher than Ares, and ἔρως dwells in the soul of Ares (cf. 196d2) → ἔρως *makes* all souls soft [Und dennoch hat die harte Brust {Even the hard heart … —a line from a German folk-song, ed.}]

196a1-7 Ἔρως is ὑγρός (wet, fluid, loose, pliant, serpentine, languishing [melting]) of *shape* (εἶδος)—[*the* εἶδος does not become a theme of Agathon]—therefore, he can pass through every soul, for every soul *as soul* is soft. *This* constitutes his συμμετρία: he makes himself symmetric to everybody—*his symmetry is his all-pliancy*—[by being pliant to all, he is also pliant to the ἄμετροι [measureless]—no distinction between noble and base ἔρως: ἔρως is *as such* noble.]

196a7-b3 ἔρως' beauty of *color* or *complexion*: since he *dwells* among those of beautiful color, he must possess beautiful colors—!

Agathon on ἔρως' *beauty*—i.e. the beauty of his *body*—he is young, delicate, of a pliant shape and of beautiful color—cf. *Rhet*. I 5.11, 13: Agathon omits *strength* and *size*—but: these 4 qualities are not sufficient for making a human being beautiful → *nothing is said of human shape*—ἔρως has the beauty of a *serpent* or a *butterfly* as much as the beauty of a human shape → b4-5: the enumeration of ἔρως' beautiful qualities is not complete.

196b4-5 (cf. 195a7)—Ἔρως' *goodness* is *not* his κάλλος → ἀρετή {virtue} is *not* καλόν {beautiful}—for: beauty = beauty of the *body*.

the 4 parts of beauty —in the sequel,	*the 4 parts of goodness*
youth	justice
delicacy	σωφροσ. [moderation] for a

similar parallel (cf. virtues of the body and the virtues of the soul), s. *Legg*. 631b6ff.

pliancy	ἀνδρεία {courage} (cf. ad c3-d5)
beautiful color	σοφία {wisdom}

196b6-c3 the greatest: not justice, but the combination of justice (not hurting others) and immunity to injustice (not being hurt)

ἔρως rules as a king over the *gods* (195c6) and the laws are the kings of the *city* [there is no connection between these two ruler-ruled relationships—for ἔρως' rule is gentle, and the rule of the νόμοι {laws} is not—Agathon is even more unpolitical than Aristophanes?]

196c3-d5 the argument: a very great coward of the greatest pliancy could control the bravest without *being* the bravest—cf. also the fact that ἔρως cannot be touched by βία {violence} (b9-c1)—*Agathon κωμῳδεῖ τὸν θεὸν* {treats the god comically}

196d1-2 *the transition from the self-subsisting god ἔρως to the ἔρως-for* in Ares (cf. already c5-6: is ἔρως a *kind* of pleasure?)

196d1-2 the *heterosexual* love—

196d5-6 the account of ἔρως' *σοφία* {eros' *wisdom*} (≠ of his beauty) claims to be *complete*—silence on the account of his justice, *moderation*, and courage

196d6-e1 Agathon praises his τέχνη as Eryximachus did his → cf. ad e1-6 (≠ his Muse, as Aristophanes)—for Aristophanes did not lay claim to wisdom because his concern was with return to the ἀρχαία φύσις {ancient nature} which antedates the very possibility of wisdom. And:

196e1-6 Ἔρως is wise *first* because he is a poet and the one who makes others poetic [but does not say that ἔρως is indispensable for poetry {LS' note on the back:} → *his* τέχνη {art} is as love-less as Er[yximachus]→ the φύσει ἄριστοι {best by nature} who are genuinely ἄριστοι {best, pl.} precisely because they are *not* inspired by ἔρως, as *Phaedrus* said (179a9)—perhaps Homer was such a poet?]

196e6-197a3 Ἔρως is wise *secondly* and *centrally* because the ποίησις {making}, i.e. the γένεσις {generation} and the φύσις {nature}of *all* ζῷα {animals} is his work. Tacit exclusion of pederasty. And: there was no γένεσις and φύσις of *any* ζῷα *prior* to ἔρως—the *gods* did not come into being by generation, through parents—were they *always*? or *how* did they come into being? Agathon does not answer these questions, for he deals only with *one* god, ἔρως: Ἔρως was *not* always, for he is the *youngest* god—he was *not* generated by parents (he agrees with Phaedrus in many things—195b6—and *especially* in this: 178b2-3)—for every generation by parents *presupposes* Ἔρως.

Ἔρως' rule was preceded by that of Ἀνάγκη {Necessity} (cf. ad 195b6-c6): did Ἀνάγκη produce Ἔρως? but if this were the case, how could Ἔρως be simply the *opposite* of Ἀνάγκη?

197a3-b9 Ἔρως is wise *thirdly* by being the inspirer of all *handling* of τέχναι {arts}—

197a3-6 *fame* in any art is due to being touched by ἔρως—e.g. fame in poetry (≠ poetry *itself*)

<31> 197a6-b3 He mentions only *gods* who became famous in the arts—because they were led by ἐπιθυμία {desire} and ἔρως (ἔρως = ἐπιθυμία—not a god). 5 gods and 7 arts.

The central *art* is μουσική [musical] → to make us see the contrast with 196d6-e6: poetry (≠ fame for poetry) does not need ἔρως.

The central *god* is Hephaestus—love for *whom* made him famous in his art? love for his wife Aphrodite? Hephaestus is also famous for the love of his wife Aphrodite for Ares—did *Aphrodite & Ares* become famous as inventors by virtue of their love? what is that ἔρως which inspires the invention of the arts? (cf. also the role of Hephaestus in *Aristophanes'* speech) → Contrary to Aristophanes, Agathon conceives of ἔρως as *civilizing* force. (cf. the silence on ἔρως in b1-3—beginning from "Muses").

197b3 through ἔρως Zeus learned to rule gods and men—Zeus rules men too—but the *cities* are ruled by *laws* (196c2-3) → no clear connection between the rule of Zeus *or* ἔρως and the rule of *laws*.

Zeus rules gods (and men), but Ἔρως rules Zeus (195c6): did Ἔρως teach Zeus how to rule Ἔρως? or is Ἔρως not a god at all? cf. ἐπιθυμία καὶ ἔρως {desire and eros} in a7.

197b3-5 Since ἔρως taught Zeus to rule *gods and men*, there arose friendship and peace among the *gods*: must the gods rule men so that there can be peace among the gods? are men absorbed into the gods or vice versa? Ἔρως is no longer an absolute: but: Ἔρως *of*—i.e. of *beauty*.

197b5-7 He now explicitly grants the truth of the stories told by Hesiod & Parmenides. (cf. 195c3).

197b7-9 Peace & friendship arose among the gods—not since Ἔρως *rules* (195c6) but since this god *came into being* or *sprang forth*—from what or through what? out of nothing and through nothing? then he *is* nothing—as a self-subsisting being. We noted some changes from Ἔρως as a self-subsisting being, i.e. a god, to a ἔρως as an activity *of* the soul or something-*for* → as a *god*, ἔρως is *nothing*, but he *is* most powerfully *in* the souls [*hence* he has no human shape]. As a self-subsisting being, ἔρως is nothing—yet we *speak* of him as a self-subsisting being—πως {somehow} he is a self-subsisting being: he *becomes* a self-subsisting {being} through *poetry*, through *tragic* poetry, for poetry as poetry *precedes* ἔρως (196e1-6) and ἔρως rules Zeus; more simply: the other gods *presuppose* ἔρως—for they have *parents*: *their* self-subsistence breaks down with Ἔρως' self-subsistence.

Ἔρως is ἔρως τοῦ κάλλους {of beauty} or more precisely *ἐρᾶν* τοῦ κάλλους {*loving* of beauty}.

Now, we have seen that Agathon uses καλόν only in the sense of bodily beauty—he never applies καλόν to the virtues → *the love of bodily beauty is the ground for everything good for gods & men.* But: ἐρᾶν τοῦ κάλλους {loving the beauty} may also mean: love of *honors* (cf. {Xenophon's} *Memor.* III beg.) → φιλοτιμία {love of honor} is not merely a byproduct of ἔρως (Phaedrus)

but a *kind* of ἔρως: the love of *fame* → the gods who became famous as artisans-artists, were indeed inspired by ἔρως, but not by ἔρως for bodily beauty but by the ἔρως for *fame*. The gods were the originators of civilisation, not indeed out of φιλανθρωπία {philanthropy} but out of φιλοτιμία.

Agathon is the first to transcend the level of bodily love—since ἔρως is on the highest level love of fame, ἔρως is in *harmony* with civilisation (≠ Aristophanes).

But: what about Agathon's *own* ἔργον {function}? He owes his *fame* as a poet to his *love* of fame—his poetry *itself*, his *wisdom* is not connected with ἔρως (cf. ad 196d6-e6): he has *no ἔρως for wisdom*.

Through "loving the beautiful things" all good things have arisen for both gods and men → via the *gods'* love of fame first? or was *human* love of fame sufficient?

197c1-3 Ἔρως being himself as the first most beautiful and most good, is thereafter responsible for the others' possessing other such like things (i.e. beautiful and good things)—prior to ἔρως, there were no beautiful and good things—the gods themselves were not beautiful and good.

c2: "the others" are human beings.

197c3-6 *The* poetic expression par exc.: ἔρως causes peace among *men* (*only* among men [≠ gods] - ≠ 195c5-6 and 197b8-9)—surely (ad 197b7-9), ἔρως as *human* love of fame is a sufficient motivation for establishing peace among men. But this limitation of ἔρως to *human* things is contradicted by the next 2 items: how can ἔρως be responsible for the quieting of winds and waves? Answer: *metaphorically*—if we compare the *passions* to strong seas etc. <32> The 4th & last item is again *human*—but not exactly a characteristic effect of ἔρως as either sexual desire or love of fame: the lie implied in the *metaphoric* description of the *true* effects of ἔρως leads to a lie regarding the effects of ἔρως.

197d1-5 ἔρως affects only human beings.

197d5-6 the gods are not wise [but ἔρως is wise: 196d5ff.] →

197e2, 4-5 ἔρως is *not* god. ἔρως the all-cheater, all-beguiler, all-enchanter—the inspirer in particular of Agathon, the *tragic* poet.

197e1-2: ἔρως *not* a στρατηγός {general}—as in Aristophanes' speech.

197d1-e5 Ἔρως *is* τὸ ἀγαθόν {the good}—not only *desire* for ἀγαθόν → Ἔρως is not ἔρως → Ἔρως is nothing.

197e6-8 Addressed to *Phaedrus* (cf. 194e1, 195a8, b6, c1): *I, Agathon, am the poet who has done what according to you no poet has done* (177a5-b1)—I have done my utmost (≠ Pausanias: what I could improvise 185c4-5; cf. also Eryximachus 188e1-4 and even Aristophanes 193d6-e3)

Summary of Agathon's speech

Starting point: he is a tragic poet → he *represents* tragic poetry—but he is not as a tragedian what Aristophanes is as a comedian—his vanity, his petty insincerities, his μαλακία {softness}: too obvious and for external κάλλος—the ἁπαλότης {simplicity} of his *speech*: nothing hard—the souls are μαλακωτάτοις {most soft} (195e3-4)—ἔρως harmonizes *everything* (195e3-4).—his speech is half *playful* (197e7), free from all *passion* because his ἔρως does not contain *suffering* (contrast with Aristophanes where there is passion in ἔρως because there is suffering in it)—his τέχνη is loveless (cf. ad 196d7-e1) and yet enchanting—shall we say that he is a *degenerate* tragic poet, an *epigonic* tragic poet? But: Agathon is closer to Socrates than any other speaker—he sits closest to him and he alone is awake at the end together with Socrates. And his doctrine: 1) ἔρως is ἔρως τοῦ *κάλλους* or τῶν καλῶν (not only of beautiful human beings nor of opposites nor of the ἀρχαία φύσις) and does not recognize anything superior to it which is alien to it. 2) ἔρως universal among the *ζῷα* (≠ Eryximachus? Aristophanes) (cf. ad 195b6-c6 in fine). 3) Agathon is the only one who raises the question regarding Ἔρως *himself*. → quâ epigonic tragic poet, he has undergone the influence of *philosophy*: he cannot take tragedy as seriously as the original tragic poets: but even in.its degeneracy, tragedy is superior to comedy—in which respect?

His praise of τέχναι {arts} (196d-197b) → he is not a rebel against νόμος {law}(ad 194d1, e5-6) (≠ comedy is such a rebellion)—in harmony with civilisation, with "κόσμος {cosmos}", for ἔρως is *also—above all* love of *fame* → silence about the cosmic gods (who lead back to chaos) and praise of the Olympian gods as originators of civilisation and as possessing νοῦς {mind} (→ silence about astronomy, the cosmic gods {LS' note on back:} implied in: Ἀνάγκη - cf. Empedocles B 116} and theoretic music).

Yet: he does not *believe* in the Olympian gods: he is the only one who makes the *being* of a god his *theme*—he *faces* that problem, whereas the others dismiss it. His primary thesis: Eros the *youngest* god and yet no parents → the *question* of his *origins*—no human shape—nothing self-subsisting: *ἐρᾶν* {*loving*}. The *youngest* god: the Olympian gods cannot have been *generated* → they have come into being out of nothing and through nothing if they are taken as they present themselves—but: they were *made* (*Phaedrus* 246a; cf. Simile on Cave): by *whom*? By *the* makers: the poets—i.e. the *tragic* poets—they are the makers of the gods of human shape: they

deify—(Aristophanes [≠ Agathon] *makes Zeus speak*: but καταγέλαστως {ridiculous})—they create the gods because they are inspired by love of κάλλος: they "idealize" men—they do this in order to raise man's stature (beings looking like men but who are deathless etc.)—they are the true founders of civility → their *solemnity*—this is higher than comedy = (rebellion against the gods) provided that tragic poets *know* what they are doing, provided they are free from the spell which they create (as Agathon is): they *establish* τὸ καλόν ψεῦδος {the beautiful lie}—which the comic poet destroys.

Kinship between the gods and *ἄρ. πολ.* {short for "best regime"}—both are only λόγῳ {in speech} —but: the logos *leading up* to … {*sic*} is suppressed (cf. 195a8-b5: the phenomenon ≠ hypothetical)

→ ἔρως (and the other gods) are mere objects of νοῦς {mind} (197e5): Agathon has *seen* Ἔρως.

Kinship between the gods and the *ideas*? Eros is desire but it does not desire—cf. the idea of a dog (= the dog itself) which is not a dog.

But: this superiority of tragedy is not *simply* true: both tragedy & comedy are *equally* necessary —

tragic—enchanting

comic—disenchanting (common sense—prosaic—cf. *Don Quixote* the clean shirts)

<33> Heraclitus fr. 32 ἓν μοῦνον σοφὸν {the one wise thing} it wishes and does not wish to be called Zeus – μανία {madness} it wishes → tragedy and φρόνησις{prudence}it does not wish → comedy to be called Zeus

→ tragedy superior to comedy not simply but due to the ὑπόθεσις {hypothesis} of *Symposium*.

1] the contest between philosophy and poetry. *Symposium*. Plato's *reply* to Aristophanes (his use of the *Frogs*) who had attacked Socrates and Euripides in the same breath—but: why was there a sympathy between Socrates and Euripides (tragedy) in the first place? what is the *principle* behind the antagonism of Socrates vs. Aristophanes? The philosopher not a tragic but a comic figure: philosopher presented only in comedy (≠ tragedy) and in the comedy necessarily from the point of view of ἔνδοξα {received opinions} → comedy *attacks* philosophy → comedy (≠ tragedy) *presents itself* as anti-philosophic.

ἔτι {besides}—τὸ γελοῖον {the ridiculous} ≠ τὸ σεμνόν {the solemn} or τὸ σπουδαῖον {the serious} → comedy presents the serious *beneath* τὸ γελοῖον: first impression is τὸ γελοῖον—not dignified.

Tragedy presents γελοῖον *beneath* the serious: the first impression is τὸ σπουδαῖον: dignified (εὐσχήμων {dignified})—philosophy must be εὐσχήμων and present *itself* as εὐσχήμων, if it is to fulfill its function.

2] Socrates's ὕβρις {hubris}—atheism = ideas (cf. *Euthyphro*) —abstraction from the soul = from the cosmic gods → esoterically ideas and exoterically Olympian gods = *recognition* of the Olympian gods = re-enacting the ἔργον {function} of the tragic poets {LS note back of the page:} [P.{eter} H.{einrich} v.{on} Bl.{anckenhagen}: Aristophanes' speech preceded by φύσει {by nature} truth → taken care of by a physician → Aristophanes' theme is φύσις; Agathon's speech preceded by a νόμῳ {by convention} truth → taken care of by an αρχων {archon} → Agathon's theme is νόμος.]

Paus.{anias} & Eryx.{imachus} the perfect erotic ass'n {association} = noble ἔρως is a *combination* of *heterogeneous* elements: love of καλόν and love for bodily pleasures {in the line beneath:} opposition of the first: αἰσχρόν

Implies: ἔρως *proper* is directed towards bodily pleasure

≠ the 2 poets, inspired Ἔρως is single minded, not subject to something extraneous. Aristophanes: attacks love of καλόν—ἔρως → *embrace* —but: this means more than it seems → ἔρως τοῦ οἰκείου {eros of one's own} = αἰσχρόν {shameful/the ugly} → comedy the element of which is τὸ αἰσχρόν {the shameful/the ugly}

Agathon: ἔρως *only* love for καλόν {beautiful}—tragic poet: κάλλος {beauty} element of tragedy—visible, manifest beauty—(the orderliness of his presentation).

Transcript 5.3

LEO STRAUSS, TWO LETTERS ON PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* (1959)

Editorial Note: These two letters addressed to Seth Benardete, one of Strauss's star students and the editor of Strauss's course on Plato's *Symposium*, are found in Leo Strauss Papers, box 18, folder 17, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library—the same folder that contains the n\otes on Plato's *Symposium* (transcript 5.1 in this volume). Numbers in the curly brackets refer to the page numbers of the typescript. Additions are all indicated by square brackets. The underlinings are replaced with italics.

{1} November 14, 1959

Dear Mr. Benardete,

I am now in the neighborhood of 205e. A question: Do you know of any other case where a woman says to a man "O comrade' (205e3)? I believe that Socrates appears here through the mask of Diotima and addresses his comrade Aristophanes.

As for the work as a whole the key can be said to be 172b1 (Alcibiades) and c3ff. Alcibiades is again in Athens, i.e. 407, and the book gives the true story of the scandal of 416 (profanation or divulgation of the mysteries). Not Alcibiades divulged any mysteries, he came in after everything was over, but Socrates (and somehow Aristophanes (189d3-4)). The accuser Aristophanes was present at the blasphemy and participated in it. In brief, the work presents Socrates's ὕβρις [hybris]. It reminds of the *Frogs* (contest between two tragedians decided with a view to Alcibiades) but it surpasses the *Frogs* in comprehensiveness (the intra-tragic contest is

over, it is a contest between all forms of Athenian wisdom and the decision is made by Alcibiades). It is narrated by men other than Socrates and thus connected with the *Parmenides* and the *Phaedo*: the latter are the dialogues exhibiting the young Socrates who also was exhibited in the *Clouds* and Aristophanes is present in the *Symposium*: but above all the Socrates conversing with Diotima is the young Socrates. The title is in a way unique; ordinarily the title indicates a participant or in seven cases the subject matter (*Republic, Laws, Sophist, Statesman, Apology, Minos, Hipparchus*); the only title akin to that of the *Symposium* is that of the *Epinomis*. The *Symposium* is the only dialogue explicitly devoted to a god; the *Epinomis* is devoted to the cosmic gods. The *Symposium* abstracts from the cosmic gods; it leads therefore just as the *Euthyphron* to an atheistic conclusion (Socrates's ὕβρις [hybris]). For eros, the most plausible of the Olympian gods, even eros proves to be no god at all. The cosmic gods come up, though not explicitly as gods, only in Aristophanes' speech (original man looked like the cosmic gods and even moved like them (eros belongs here rather to the cosmic gods than to the Olympian gods)).

1) Phaedrus. 178b8-11. One must restore the ms. reading. Parmenides in the center because he praises eros most highly and he indicates the cause of eros. This praise of Parmenides is connected with the fact that Phaedrus's speech is unique, separated by a hiatus from the next speech; he realizes that the beloved is higher than the lover although or because the god is in the lover. He looks at eros from the point of view of the beloved (of himself), from the point of view of his gain. In all these points he anticipates Socrates. The first three speeches present eros as subordinate to something extraneous to it: gain, moral virtue, and techne [art]. The three last speeches present eros as "sovereign": love of αἶσχος [aischos = shame] love of καλός [kalos = beautiful], and love of the good.

2) Pausanias. This is the only deliberative speech occurring in Plato; in the guise of a praise of the Athenian νόμος [nomos = law] it is a proposal of a change of that νόμος (184c7-8). An elderly lover needs support by his respectability for his erotic success; he is the natural representative of the moralistic presentation of eros. Also, his presentation of the perfect erotic association is a parody of the polis which also has two heterogenous origins.

3) Eryximachus. The basis is Empedocles: love of the similar leads to chaos, love of the opposites to cosmos; in order to defend pederasty—for the defense of pederasty is the subject begun by Pausanias, continued by Eryximachus (185e6-186a1) and completed by Aristophanes; {2} in order to

defend pederasty Eryximachus must assert the superiority of love of the similar and this brings him into obvious difficulties especially since he also wishes to praise his τέχνη [techne = art](e.g. is it the task of medicine to cure men of heterosexuality or to bring about heterosexual relations, abhorred by nature, for the sake of the preservation of the species?). His pan-eroticism of Empedoclean origin leads just as in Empedocles himself (fr. 111) to the absolute rule of τέχνη [art]; for if love rules everything we humans must make a distinction between the right kind of love and the wrong kind (Heracleitus fr. 102).[1] We also must not forget that Empedocles' poem is addressed to Pausanias. Also Eryximachus's ending with appraise of μαντική [mantike = divination] reminds of Empedocles. Eryximachus's speech is in a way the central speech and therefore one may say that Empedocles is the target of the whole discussion.

4) Aristophanes. By nature men were simply cosmic beings; and the only link with the Olympian gods was the fact that they had genitals and we must add that they were not limited to mating seasons; the specificum is not rationality but sexiness. Not limited like the brutes by nature, man had to be limited by νόμος [nomos = law, convention]: the scission by Zeus (the beginning of Zeus' speech (190c7) is identical with the beginning of the whole work). Note also Apollo's blundering: he used up the skin of the whole for the half (hence the wrinkles), the other half skinless perished and therefore eros is hopelessly tragic. Incidentally, constant and through comparison of this story with Protagoras' story in the *Protagoras* is indispensable (the connection of the work as a whole with the *Protagoras* is obvious because of five of the characters). Eros is quest for one's own flesh and blood, most radically incestuous (cf. *Birds* and *Clouds*). More generally, love of one's own, and therefore also of the fatherland (cf. Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 350 or thereabouts). This is *the* alternative to Agathon according to whom love is quest for the beautiful. Abstraction from the former is characteristic of the *Symposium*.

5) Agathon. The most interesting passage in Agathon's speech is the verses in 197c5-6: eros' work limited to human beings (peace among *men*), the *metaphoric* extension of the effect of eros to winds and waves, i.e. human passions, and hence finally a non-metaphoric untrue statement about eros' effect (sleep). Agathon lets us see that eros as a self-subsisting being is nothing, since he has come to being out of nothing; he is only by virtue of the poet, i.e. the tragic poet, and this is true of all gods. I changed my mind regarding Plato's view of tragedy: tragedy is not the conflict between two opposite καλά [beautiful things], but rather reconciliation

through the gods; therefore the relation of comedy and tragedy is: construction of the gods and destruction of the gods, enchanting and disenchanting. Both are equally necessary but if the tragic poet knows what he is doing he is higher than the comic poet, because his construction includes the destruction (223d5; "by art," and the statement cannot be inverted). This does not do away with the fact that Aristophanes is superior as an individual to the individual Agathon: both Aristophanes and Socrates begin their speeches with the same words.

Aristophanes begins with a bodily predicament which is healed by a physician. Socrates begins with a moral predicament, an oath which embarrasses him now, which is healed by himself, for he is an Odysseus (198c2-5). With an unsurpassable insolence he makes clear in the same context (d) that his praise of eros will consist in being silent about its seamy side (i.e. about eros as love of one's own).

As for Socrates's speech, I would like say now only that 203dff. make it clear that eros has absolutely nothing to do with the gods: {3} he resembles only his mother, although he seems to resemble also his father. This is due to an ambiguity regarding Poverty. Is she sheer ignorance or dissatisfaction with ignorance? The problem was stated by Aristophanes in his *Plutus* (550–554). I just noted that in the Diotima section as distinguished from all other sections there is no reference to its being reported by Aristodemus or Apollodorus. This observation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for understanding the strange goings-on regarding: "I said" (ἔφην, εἶπον, etc.); cf. in particular 202c5, 205c3, 10, d9. Mr. Gildin[2] who has been so good as to take down this dictation tells me that this lecture course will be typed pretty soon. Still, I believe that I have given you the highlights. With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

{1} November 30, 1959

Dear Mr. Benardete,

Socrates's speech in the *Banquet* consists of 7 parts (= to the number of speeches in the work). I Introduction on the true rhetoric (corresponds to Phaedrus's speech—foreshadows the *Phaedrus*). II Dialogue with Agathon. III Dialogue of the young Socrates with Diotima (the three dialogues narrated but not by Socrates (*Parmenides, Phaedo, Banquet*) are the only dialogues revealing the young Socrates). A) the nature of eros B) the human need for eros C) (207a5 to end) a) eros in procreation b) eros in ambition c) eros of the beautiful. The center is IIIB: eros is neither love

of the beautiful (against Agathon) nor love of one's own (against Aristophanes): in IIIC both love of one's own and love of the beautiful are restored but the restoration takes place without the restoration of the gods: eros as love of one's own and love of the beautiful is the root of the Olympian gods (love of deathless beauty and love of one's own, i.e. the fatherland and dike [justice], hence the avenging gods). Diotima's speech effects a catharsis of eros. IIICb is a philosophic presentation of poetry and IIICc a poetic presentation of philosophy: Socrates wins the contest by being able to give these two presentations. I believe that Alcibiades's speech is a poetic presentation of Socrates, which is in one way utterly ridiculous: he proves that Socrates has hybris by proving that the has the greatest moderation; he speaks of the inner beauty of Socrates, of the fact that he alone knows Socrates's *pragma* [business], but in that famous night he did not discover in any way Socrates's secret teaching. The presentation of the poets—desire for immortal fame leads to immortal works—poses the question of Socrates's not writing. The answer I believe is that the perfect writing is tragedy containing comedy, not the other way round. And Socrates could not write tragedy (see *Gorgias*, the Callicles section). It is particularly amusing that Alcibiades presents Socrates as a kind of popular preacher of repentance, Savonarola style; if Socrates had been such a man he would have written.

One can figure out the personnel of the *Banquet* by considering that all combinations of the three following alternatives must be in. a) lover - beloved b) old—young c) cautious—soft - manly. The speeches not reported (end of Phaedrus's speech) are those of those combinations which are unworthy. This calculation is confirmed if one assumes that the total number of invited guests plus the host is nine, and there are two uninvited guests. Socrates represents two combinations: old—manly—lover and old - manly—beloved. Aristophanes I believe is old—soft - beloved—his lover is Plato.

As ever yours,
Leo Strauss

Notes

1. "To God all things are fair, good and just, but men suppose some things are unjust, some just" (Diels–Kranz 22 B 102).

2. Hilail Gildin (1928–2015), a student of Leo Strauss and a professor at Queens College, City University of New York.

Transcript 7.1

"Religion and the Commonweal in the Tradition of Political Philosophy": The Lecture (1963)

Editorial Note: The following transcript is of a 1963 lecture by Leo Strauss delivered at the Hillel House, University of Chicago. An early version of this lecture was previously published relying entirely on the surviving recording of the lecture.[1] Fortunately, since then the original manuscript of the lecture has been discovered.[2] This manuscript is of substantial importance for improving the transcript as it not only reflects Strauss's whole thought process but also clarifies some of the more obscure parts of the lecture. We have now entirely revised the transcript on the basis of the manuscript, added the supplementary information available in the manuscript but missing from the lecture, and clarified some aspects of the lecture with footnotes and similar editorial aids.

As the manuscript itself is of considerable importance and gives access to Strauss's personal reflections on the subject of the lecture, we have concluded that it is beneficial to provide a transcript of the manuscript after the lecture transcript as well so that the readers can consult both and compare them. To facilitate the comparison, the relevant paragraph numbers of the manuscript are added to the lecture transcript (¶ paragraph number). The reader should keep in mind, however, that in many cases, it is impossible to say with confidence where a new paragraph in the manuscript begins and ends and the editors had to rely on their judgment. The important point is that Strauss did not, unlike some of his other manuscripts, number his paragraphs, hence the division of the text into paragraphs does not seem to be crucial. Our editorial interventions

are mostly present in the lecture transcript and we have kept the transcript of the manuscript intact by limiting the indispensable comments to the footnotes.

Acknowledgment: We thank Professor Nathan Tarcov for giving us permission on behalf of Jenny Strauss to publish these two transcripts in this volume. She retains all rights for further publication of the transcripts. The transcript were considerably improved by Nathan Tarcov, Gayle McKeen, and two anonymous reviewers of the journal of *American Political Thought*, to whom we are grateful.

Religion and the Commonweal Lecture, the Hillel Foundation, January 27, 1963

Moderator: I would like to welcome you all to Hillel this evening. When we have a series like this, there is always a tendency to multiply introducers. As host, I guess, I am happy to welcome you all and then very quickly to call upon Mr. George Anastaplo,[3] who helped arrange, or actually did arrange this evening series. Mr. Anastaplo, as is well known to you, is lecturer in liberal arts at the downtown center of the College, and he will introduce both the series and the speaker of this evening. Mr. Anastaplo!

Anastaplo: It is a privilege to have Mrs. Pekarsky here this evening, especially since this is a series dedicated to the memory of her late husband, and I like to think that this is a series that Rabbi Pekarsky particularly would have enjoyed.[4] We prepared several such as this in recent years, and this is one that he was working on, in fact, the last one that he was working on before he had to be taken to the hospital last summer. I should add that the preparation of the series is in large part due to Mr. Ralph Lerner[5] and to Mr. [Werner] Dannhauser,[6] who will be lecturing next Sunday evening, same time. Our program will consist of the talk, and then a question period, then tea or coffee afterward, and brochures can be gotten afterward for the remainder of the series. I turn now to the lecture of the evening. It is fitting and proper, I believe, that a distinguished professor of political philosophy who was regarded so highly by Rabbi Pekarsky during an association of almost a decade and a half, or almost two decades, should open this series on "Religion and Commonweal." Mr. Strauss will speak on the tradition of political philosophy.

[¶ 1] *Leo Strauss:* Ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Pekarsky. This is the first time that I have the honor to give a lecture in Hillel House after the death of my friend Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky. Permit me to pay homage to his

memory. The soul and substance of Rabbi Pekarsky was Jewish piety, simple old-fashioned, chaste, Jewish piety. He dedicated his life to keeping alive this holy fire, or to revive it. He knew very well how difficult this task was in the middle of the twentieth century, especially at a university like ours. He acted in this difficult situation with singular tact and prudence. He did not protest against those who tried to reduce Judaism to social ethics on the one hand, and to an ethnic culture on the other, since both parties retain a part, however small, of the ancient truth and since their very antagonism, the antagonism between the universal and the particular, points to the full truth: the chosen people, the people chosen to be witness of justice. He did not rebuff, nay he attracted those who were not as blessed as he was, who had not succeeded in finding a way of reconciling the old piety and the new science, for he was united with them in love of truth. This was indeed the limit of his tolerance and forbearance. He just tolerated, for he was a very polite man, those for whom the university is above all a place for promoting themselves. I believe, and after having heard Mr. Anastaplo, I know that he would have approved of the effort of Mr. Anastaplo and his friends, which is to explore how one can secure by human means the future of religion without infringing on the rights of man.

[¶ 2] I would like to say first a few words about how I plan to approach this subject. I speak, of course, as a social scientist. A social scientist is a man who is sworn to face and pronounce also unpleasant truths, truths unpleasant to himself.[7] There are two kinds of unpleasant truths: unpleasant truths which are at the same time pleasant, and simply unpleasant truths. I give an example of both. For example, it is not altogether unpleasant for a friend of big businesses to point out the vicious, the unpleasant power of the labor unions; nor for a friend of the labor unions to point out the unpleasant power of big businesses. These are pleasant facts for these people, facts on which they thrive. The truly unpleasant facts are those which render questionable one's party line. For example, like Yalta [Conference] for the professional liberal, and strong central government with a terrific defense budget for the professional conservative. It is in this spirit that I approach my subject: what does the tradition of political philosophy teach regarding religion and the commonweal?

[¶ 3] Voltaire has said "celui qui n'ose regarder fixement les deux pôles de la vie [humaine], la religion et le government n'est qu'un lâche."[8] He who doesn't dare to look straight at the two poles of life, religion and government, is only a coward. In the language of our time, the two poles of

life are government, the subcultural, and religion, the supracultural. Two *stern* and exacting things, as distinguished from culture. If we understand politics and religion in terms of culture, we obscure the fundamental difficulty: government, the commonweal, is necessarily particular; religion is, at least according to its intention, universal, embracing all men. If we look at everything from the point of view of culture, we forget the universal, because culture is something used in the plural; we forget the universal, the truly human, for culture as the term is now used is essentially particular.

[¶ 4] Now if we were to follow this thought, we might be compelled to question the concept not only of culture, but even the concept of religion. "Religion" is not a Hebrew term nor a Greek term. It stems from Latin. Piety is indeed a universal term. But is religion the same as piety? That is a rather subtle question. When we say of a man he is religious, and when we say he is pious, I think we do not in all cases mean the same thing. For example, I do not believe that anyone ever called [Martin] Buber pious, whereas he is of course a religious man. But let us not appear to be pedantic. Let us say, as we are entitled to say by our[9] Western tradition, that religion simply means every human concern with a personal god, with a god who thinks and wills and is concerned with man, with every man, or, to use a current expression, a being who is a "Thou."[10]

[¶ 5] As for the political philosophy mentioned in the title of the lecture, I have made its meaning sufficiently clear for our present purpose by speaking of the *tradition* of political philosophy.[11] Political philosophy, I indicated, is something which is not precisely thriving in our age, not in spite but because of the fact that the word "philosophy," and "political philosophy," is used in our time, I believe every day, more than it was ever used in the past. This is one of the characteristics of our times. Just to illustrate what this means: the word "historic" is doubtless now used with great prodigality. Every day we read of another "historic" event, and these events prove to be worthy of a headline today but to be forgotten tomorrow, and surely not later than next year. So in other words, we suffer from a kind of inflation regarding these words, and this applies to the word "philosophy" too. Inflation must not deceive us about the *scarcity* of the real stuff, and this applies to political philosophy itself. Yet, however absent political philosophy may be from our age, all present-day discussions, for instance of the question of religion and the commonweal, are *based*, whether the discussants know it or not, on political philosophy. This is incidentally especially true of the so-called *liberal* position.

The liberal position regarding this issue is surely not based on religion (Jewish *or* Christian) but on the unassisted human mind alone, and hence on philosophy.

[¶ 7] Now one thing one may say while being reasonably certain that it will be permitted to pass by everyone is this: political philosophy emerged in Greece, and the classical document of Greek political philosophy is Aristotle's *Politics*. Let us then begin here: What do we learn from Aristotle on our subject? Somewhere in the seventh book of the *Politics*, he enumerates the functions, the works (ἔργα), essential to the commonweal.[12] He mentions six of them in ascending order: from food, below, to government, at the top; and in this enumeration there occurs the following strange expression: "fifth and first, the concern regarding the divine."[13] What does he mean by that? [¶ 8] In the first place, he means: no commonweal or city is possible without religion, without *established* religion, a *state* religion obligatory on all citizens. In the sole remark which Aristotle makes in his own name on natural right (τὸ φύσει δίκαιον), he indicates that sacrificing to the gods, and hence of course also praying, belongs to natural right (iure naturali). It is by nature just that the citizens pray and sacrifice.[14] Every society must have this concern with the divine as a *public* political concern. Now this concern is "the first in a way" (πως πρῶτον), Aristotle says "fifth and first." [¶ 9] It is the first because it is more necessary even than food, and at the same time it is higher even than the government. But in another respect it is not the first, therefore he says "*fifth* or first." The divine (τὸ θεῖον) in itself is surely higher than anything human (ἀνθρώπινον). But what Aristotle speaks of here, the political concern with the divine, this is not the highest. This political concern with the divine is something radically distinguished from *knowledge* of the divine, and knowledge of the divine would be, according to Aristotle, the highest human pursuit. This kind of concern, the political kind of concern, is neither the highest nor is it the most fundamental. Aristotle explains this in a passage of the *Metaphysics*, twelfth book,[15] very famous in the Middle Ages, in the Latin Middle Ages, [where Aristotle speaks of thinkers] at the beginning, and quote "the opinion of the fathers."[16] Now, what does he say there? He speaks there of the popular notions regarding the gods which underlie public established religion. These popular notions contain an element of truth, but they are not completely true: something untrue is added to them. Why? "For the persuasion of the many, and for use in regard to the laws and to the useful [i.e., the politically useful—LS]."[17] The laws, the ordinary

political laws, need, in a sense, superhuman support. Laws as Aristotle understands them cannot be simply rational or reasonable, because the simply rational or reasonable does not have a great force. The reasonable is powerful in the arts, in medicine, shoemaking, strategy, or what have you, but it is not regarding laws. Laws owe their validity decisively to *custom*, to habituation, not to their intrinsic rationality, and therefore they need another support, a superhuman support.[18] Religion, in a word—if we translate Aristotle's term, "the concern with the divine" by religion, as we may—religion is *civil* religion, political religion, a part of the political establishment. We can also use another term, not occurring in Aristotle but somewhat later: we can say there is a "civil theology" as distinguished from the true philosophic theology. This term is best known from a quotation in Augustine, traced to some Stoics, but the thought is of course clearly in Aristotle.[19] [¶ 10] Now, this view is not peculiar to Aristotle. I mention a few points. Plato: Everyone knows the thesis of Plato's *Republic*: the rule of philosophers is *the* condition for public happiness. But if you read this in the context of the *sequel* of the *Republic*, the dialogue called *Timaeus*, you see that the rule of philosophers takes the place not simply of the rule of the people, or of the aristocrats, or of the kings, but especially it takes the place of the rule of *priests*.[20] The rule of philosophers is, as it were, the only adequate answer to the rule of the priests.

I will now only assert that something of this kind, religion as civil religion, is a teaching of all classical philosophers. [¶ 11] *The* example is the famous case of Socrates. Socrates was accused of having committed an unjust act by not worshiping the gods of the city. Now, what does this mean? Did he not bring the sacrifice or did not bring them in an orderly, law-prescribed manner? Plato's *interpretation* of the charge is this: Socrates did not believe that the gods worshiped by the city of Athens *exist*. This is infinitely graver than to omit occasionally a sacrifice, as he admits having omitted at the end of his life, when he says to Crito, "We have forgotten to bring a sacrifice to Asclepius."[21] You know this was not quite orthodox, and he gave this as a last injunction to his friend: "Bring that sacrifice tomorrow." Surely, Socrates did not *preach* that the gods worshiped by the city of Athens do not exist, which is much graver, but in his famous *Apology*, he does not meet that charge. When you read it, you see that he does not refute it. He lays a trap for the accuser, and the accuser, a fool, goes into the trap, and then Socrates is out of all difficulties. But it is surely not a refutation of the charge. Socrates somehow claims, of course, that he is not guilty as charged, and therewith by implication, after he

is condemned, that he is *innocently* condemned.[22] But this is a somewhat queer story. When someone, a very enthusiastic admirer of Socrates, says, "How terrible, Socrates, that you have been unjustly condemned," Socrates laughs—the only time he ever laughed—and says, "Would you prefer that I were justly condemned?"[23] [laughter] But there can be no question if you read the evidence that he was guilty as charged. Now, he cannot deny to the polis, to the city, the right to demand that every citizen believes in the existence of Zeus, Hera, and the whole lot (νομίζειν).[24] He makes only one reservation where he would refuse to obey the city: even if the city would enact legally a law forbidding philosophizing, he says he would disobey that law.[25] But such a law was not in existence, and would probably never have been enacted in these terms. What he does not, of course, speak about is the connection between the prohibition against philosophizing and the prohibition against not believing in the existence of the gods worshiped by the city of Athens. He goes so far in the *Apology* to say that his philosophizing is due to a straight command of a god, of Apollo, who had *commanded* him to philosophize. Now again, if you read it, you see that Apollo didn't do anything of this kind. When [Apollo was asked] the ambiguous question, when he was asked by another enthusiastic admirer of Socrates, "Is anyone wiser than Socrates?" Apollo or the priestess said, "No, no one is wiser than Socrates," which of course is not exactly a command: "Socrates, you must philosophize!" Socrates interpreted it to mean that he is wiser than the others according to the gods, because he knows that he knows nothing; and therefore in order to convince himself and others, he goes around in Athens and shows up everyone who *pretends* to be wise. And of course, that is not too difficult for him: he shows that these men who pretend to be wise are in fact very unwise. And then he gets very unpopular by that, and the end of it is the condemnation. But however large a view we may take of how oracles can be interpreted, it stretches the thing a bit to say that it was a clear injunction of Apollo.

[¶ 12] Now Plato, after the experience of Socrates, made an honest effort to solve that problem shown by Socrates's fate, namely, that he is a philosopher who as such cannot believe in the gods worshiped by the city of Athens, and philosophy and the city are incompatible. How can one make them compatible?[26] This is a great problem which Plato solved in the *Laws*, especially in the tenth book, where he shows what the proper legislation regarding religion would be, namely, to demand from every citizen belief in those gods whose existence can be demonstrated (the

existence of Zeus and so on can never be demonstrated), and these are what we may call the cosmic gods, meaning the heavenly bodies which Plato thought were animate beings. And in this better city of the *Laws*, only this rational belief is demanded from every citizen, and of course then also legally enforced. And Socrates could have lived and died without any difficulty in such a city. The punishment for unbelief there is very complicated. One has first the impression that it is capital punishment in every case, but this is not quite true because if a man is just, has led a just life, and is not orthodox along the lines of this *rational* religion, he will not be condemned to death; this is made clear later on.[27]

This much about Aristotle and Plato. But some could say: but in all cases, there *must* be a public religion which every citizen must accept. [¶ 13] But one could say: were there no *radicals* in classical antiquity—*liberals*, as some people say? Now there are quite a few people today who assert that, and they refer to such people as Protagoras, who of course was not an Athenian citizen, but who lived in Athens for a while and got into troubles because his book began roughly with the sentence, "Whether the gods are or are not, I do not know. The difficulty or the remoteness of the subject matter and the brevity of my life prevent me from finding out the truth."[28] And he has been called an agnostic because he didn't formally deny but only expressed his doubt. But one must also say that—and there were such people—neither Protagoras nor any other man of whom we know something engaged in *propagating* this view. These were people who in very private circles of refined society said these things, and perhaps to some extent also in writing, but we have only fragments of these writings; we do not know how that thing looked in the whole book. It is always dangerous to judge on the basis of fragments. The view fostered in our age by some Marxist and crypto-Marxist authors that the lines were roughly drawn in antiquity as in our time: a right and a left, and the right were these cursed fellows Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the reactionaries; and the left were the precursors of John Dewey [laughter]—just, I mean, a piece of fiction which has no basis. The clear, very clear statement by Edmund Burke will help to clarify the situation. Burke said somewhere, "Boldness formerly was not the character of Atheists as such. They were even of a character nearly the reverse; they were formerly like the old Epicureans, rather an unenterprising race. But of late they are grown active, designing, turbulent, and seditious."[29] These old irreligious people were not an enterprising race, they were sometimes what we now call intellectuals, and in other cases a kind of bums [laughter] living at the margin

of society (λάθε βιώσας), but that had no political importance.[30] We can safely say that the political philosophy which existed in classical antiquity is that of men like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and the Stoics. [¶ 14] The other people who could be regarded as precursors of modern liberalism were not *politically* interested. There was not a ghost of a chance of a hope that this kind of thought could become *politically* relevant. Good.

Now let me summarize then this point. No religion—I mean the view which Aristotle implies, and which Aristotle, Plato, and others imply. And please understand me: I take now religion in the precise sense as a translation of what Aristotle means by "the concern with the divine" as the fifth and the first, nothing more. But one must be somehow precise. I have heard people say in this country: Well, I am a religious man, I am a scientist! If you call any dedication religion, then of course one can say every dedicated man is religious, but I think this is a gross misuse of words. [¶ 15] Now if I state then the view of the classics coherently, I would say this: no religion is *true*, but *some* religion, *any* religion is politically necessary. Law and morality are insufficient for the large majority of men. Obedience to the law and to the moral rules is insufficient for making men happy—well, the well-known fact that [the] wicked are happy and the just live in misery. Law and morality are therefore in need of being *supplemented* by divine rewards and punishments. The *true* supplement to law and morality is, however, philosophy, but philosophy is essentially the preserve of *very few* men, because a special *nature* (φύσις) is required for becoming a philosopher. [¶ 16] Religion is here not meant to be the work of philosophers. None of these philosophers believed that he could *found* a religion. Religion is a work of the *founders* or legislators, and philosophy simply *finds* that and has to accept it. Yet philosophy can and should affect or modify religion. While it is indispensable to the city, religion also creates certain *dangers* to the city. Famous cases: earthquakes and eclipses interpreted as bad *omina*: panics in the army. Well, what do you do if you have an enlightened general, like Pericles, like Scipio? He will give a brief lecture to the army and tell them that has happened perfectly naturally and there is no omen in it. So [that is] an interesting question and the first book of Cicero's *Republic* is the most coherent discussion of that.[31] Or another case: the famous naval battle of Arginusae, which the Athenians won, but there the generals or admirals didn't take care of picking up, not the shipwrecked soldiers, but the corpses. Now according to the Athenian religious notion, the corpses have to be brought *home* to be buried properly, and the generals were condemned to death.[32] Now here there was

another case where from the philosopher's point of view some information about the irrelevance of the mere corpse, as it is given for example in Plato's *Phaedo*, would have been helpful for the sake of humanity.[33]

Forgive me if I mention also an example from Jewish history: no fighting on Sabbath. You know, at the beginning of the Maccabean wars, no fighting on Sabbath; and then it simply had to be changed because it proved to be impossible.[34] Another example which goes *through* the ages from classical antiquity on: the institution of religious asylum. Someone touching an altar, a murderer, is protected by this very fact—an *irrational* practice which must be changed. The most urgent and famous question today of this nature is of course the question of birth control, as you all know. [¶ 17] The position in this respect of the philosophers was clearly indicated by the Jewish *pious* poet Judah Halevi, who said that the philosophers, in contradistinction to religion or Judaism in particular, do not recognize a single rule of action, of conduct which is universally valid. In other words, when the common good is in danger, there is no rule which cannot be disregarded.[35]

[¶ 18] Now, what was the actual influence of philosophy on religion in this respect? Well, one can say there was a fairly liberal religious practice, for example in Athens for some time, and that had to do with the fact that Pericles was under the influence of men like Anaxagoras, a philosopher, and other cases. There was also a very liberal practice in the Roman Empire to some extent. But this liberal practice is one thing, and *legal* protection is another. If we are concerned with *legal* protection, we must say classical antiquity philosophic, or non-philosophic was radically *illiberal*. There was nothing corresponding to the First Amendment. No freedom of religion was recognized in theory or in practice. To repeat, what happened was in certain cities for certain periods very liberal practice because of easygoing people, but when it came to a *test*, this liberalism could not be defended. [¶ 19] Now, the danger from this point of view was not that the polis represses religious *freedom*—this they did not even *desire*—but the undue influence of religion or priests on the city. About this, they were seriously concerned, but they did not demand in any way freedom of religion. Religious repression, or positively stated, religious uniformity, is a *need*; the *true* concern with the divine is *knowledge* in contradistinction to prayer and sacrifice. And the basis of that is, to elaborate one point I indicated before—the fundamental human fact, so to speak, is the gulf between the philosophers and nonphilosophers, whom they called the *demos*, the common people. The very *ends* of the

philosophers and the nonphilosophers differ, and therefore the freedom which the philosophers can have cannot be had by anybody else.

But there is a point which is not altogether unimportant: the philosophers recognized the existence of an *intermediate* group between the philosophers and the *demos*, and these are the people whom they called the *educated* people (πεπαιδευμένοι), people who have *listened* to philosophers and have come under their influence. In more social terms, the gentlemen. A gentleman meant here an urban patrician. According to the orthodox doctrine, this urban patriciate had to derive its livelihood from agriculture, but as a matter of fact, it was largely commercial, and I think that the history of philosophy, viewed from the point of view of mere sociology of philosophy, is to a large extent the history of a commercial patriciate. This, I think, goes until the eighteenth century. This was the social basis of philosophy strictly understood.

[¶ 20] It is absolutely necessary that I say a word on what I have called political theology.[36] Now by political theology, I mean teachings based on divine revelation, like the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and perhaps others. And from the point of view of any form of political theology, one particular religion is *the* true religion; whereas from the point of view of the philosophers, *no* religion is the true religion. Let us look for one moment at the difference between the three universal monotheistic religions. Judaism does not demand from all men that they become Jews: as you know, only those born from a Jewish mother. Christianity demands—Christianity in principle—from all men [to become Christians], but tolerates Jews with great disability. I am speaking now of course of the situation up to, what, 200 years ago. Islam tolerates Jews and Christians with considerable civil disabilities. Now, this had of course to do with the fact that Christians recognize Mosaic revelation and the Muslims recognize the Jewish and Christian revelation although they do not recognize the books. [¶ 21] Now does the Jewish position entail recognition of a right to be irreligious? This, I believe, is a question which we must raise with a view to the burning question of our time. I would say: No! The basis of traditional Jewish toleration, or however we might call it, is the famous sentence that the pious—or the righteous, as people say—among the nations of the world, i.e., amongst the non-Jews, have a share in the world to come, [37] which in Christian understanding means they will be *saved*.[38] But righteous is—the word is the pious—it goes without saying that is simply understood that these righteous men will of course believe in God. [¶ 22] Maimonides, who is generally regarded as the greatest Jewish authority in post-Talmudic

times, *limits* this high position to non-Jews who recognize and perform the so-called seven Noahide commandments, the commandments which were already given according to the Bible not later than Noah's time, that is to say, after the Deluge, immediately after the Deluge. And they include such prohibitions against murder and theft, and so on, and of course also against idolatry. But Maimonides limits this toleration to non-Jews who recognize and perform these seven Noahide commandments *on the basis of the Mosaic revelation*. That is to say that anyone who abstains from these actions because he has a natural inclination towards that abstention, or because his reason has led him to abstain from them does not belong according to Maimonides to these pious among the gentiles. In practical terms, that means Maimonides limits this toleration to Christians and Muslims, because they of course by definition recognize the Mosaic revelation.[39] Pagans are excluded, and this creates some problem because one of the pagans was Aristotle, whom Maimonides admired very highly. [¶ 23] In the discussion about this decision of Maimonides, which became more and more shocking, the more the modern liberal notions prevailed within Judaism, a defender of Maimonides in the older view quoted from the 9th Psalm, verses which I may read in English translation: "the wicked shall be turned into hell and all nations that forget God … Arise O Lord, let no man prevail, let the heathen be judged in thy sight."[40]

[¶ 24] I must mention one point because this becomes important later on. On the basis of political *theology*, in contradistinction to political philosophy, there is this fundamental difficulty. What is better: *no* religion or a *false* religion? I mean, given the fact that there will be people who will not have *the* true religion, what is better? In other words, what is better or worse: atheism or a living faith in a beast like Moloch? Because faith in Moloch is of course religion of a sort, and atheism clearly is not. [¶ 25] The *true* religion is known as such only by revelation, not by reason or nature, and therefore there cannot be a *natural* obligation to worship and to love God, *the* true God. This is recognized by Thomas Aquinas: not reason *simply*, but reason informed by *faith* teaches that God is to be loved and worshiped.[41] This means that—deviating from Aristotle, and deviating because for Thomas Aquinas [Christianity] is *the* true religion—Thomas teaches that divine worship is not strictly speaking an institute of natural right, for natural theology, i.e., the natural knowledge of God's existence and so on, does not lead to the insight that God *alone* must be worshiped, which is, of course, the principle of Christianity, as it is of Judaism and Islam. [¶ 26] Now natural theology does not lead to the insight that God

alone must be worshiped, because the alternative being the Aristotelian view, the belief in the eternity of the world, and on this basis, the heavenly bodies, for example, are eternal and therefore can legitimately be called gods, as they are called by Aristotle, and then there is no reason why they shouldn't be worshiped. This much, I think, is clear.

[¶ 27] Now let me continue with my theme proper. Freedom of religion as a right, as it is recognized in the First Amendment, is something specifically *modern*, especially in that interpretation according to which freedom *of* religion includes the freedom of *irreligion*, and this is I think the only interesting case. But someone can say: Is not freedom of religion in the widest sense simply the right of the *conscience*, which includes the right of the *erring* conscience and therefore also in principle of atheism? This is a Christian view, to which I have to say first that conscience is not a philosophic conception but it stems from Christian theology, at least in this meaning. Hence this line of thought does not belong to the tradition of political philosophy. Secondly, however, I believe that the freedom of the erring conscience is not freedom for any false religion. I mean that the erring conscience is *excused* doesn't mean that the man of the erring conscience has a full *legal* right, for example, to *propagate* his false teaching. We also cannot entirely divorce the ecclesiastical teaching according to which the erring conscience *binds*—it binds, it doesn't give rights—from consideration of the ecclesiastical practice. [¶ 28] One can say, however, that freedom of religion is an indirect consequence of the Reformation, the whole story with which you are familiar since your grade school days: the Reformation, the religious wars, the ruin of Europe, the desire to stop that bloodshed and the devastation, tolerance. There is no question about this historical concatenation. One must also mention that there were certain *sects*, Christian sects from the very beginning of the Reformation who were in favor of toleration. But again I say, and that is not merely a verbal excuse, this is not political philosophy. These sectarians who wanted their freedom of religion on the basis of certain *Christian* notions of the conscience and of faith, these were surely not philosophers.

However, *prior* to the Reformation, or at any rate independently of it, certain *modifications* of classical political philosophy occurred within political philosophy. [¶ 29] I mention two names: The first is Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, which is written fundamentally from a philosophic point of view, published in 1516, that is to say, one year before the outbreak of the Reformation. Now in this perfect commonwealth, *Utopia*, which is described there, the established—there is an established religion—is,

however, *the* natural or rational religion, something which Plato had somehow *hinted* at in the *Laws*. But everyone is free to add to it of his own; for example, if he thinks he should worship, say, Mercury, the star [planet] Mercury, in addition to the one cause of everything, he is perfectly free to do so. No one can be *persecuted* on account of his religion. Everyone may follow the religion which he likes, except that no one who doesn't believe in the immortality of the souls and in providence can be a citizen. This is the absolute limit. So there *is* an established religion. No one may defend his religious views differing from the accepted views in *public*, but he may defend it before priests and serious men, grave men, *viri graves*.[42] But again, there is no punishment for infraction. The public cult is uniform but does not violate anything peculiar to anyone's *private* religion. For example, there is no prayer which *everyone* could not speak—I think you are reminded of many contemporary facts by that;[43] it's very interesting, in 1516! In brief, a society united in and by *the* true religion of reason. It tolerates additions to it, but no *subtraction*.

[¶ 30] The contemporary of More who also made a considerable change in the traditional doctrine was Machiavelli, in his two great books which were written at about the same time as *Utopia* was. I mention only one point, the only point of epoch-making importance. Machiavelli teaches that a public religion is *indispensable*, as everyone else had taught before him, but he makes this qualification: for *republics*, not in absolute monarchy; there the strong arm of the prince can supply what religion otherwise gives. So this is a kind of inkling of the so-called *enlightened* despotism of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. I do not know of any suggestion of this kind from earlier literature, but let us keep in mind the implication of Machiavelli: while an irreligious absolute monarchy, despotism, may be possible, an irreligious *republic* is not [SPINOZA].

[¶ 31] Now the change which was effected by Machiavelli—and the man who in these matters is his successor surely, Hobbes—is fundamental, because it concerns the relation of philosophy and the commonweal. I must, unfortunately, say a few words about that. The change, in brief, consists of two elements. [Strauss interrupts his talk and asks the moderator for more time: "Do I have 20 minutes?" "Yes, sir."] [¶ 32] The first is this: science is for the sake of power.[44] Science is not—and science means always philosophy, that is not different at this time—science is not for its own sake but for the sake of power, for the "relief of man's estate," as someone called it. [45] That implies that from now on, the ultimate end of the philosopher and the end of the nonphilosophers are the *same*. There

is no longer that gulf which existed in classical times; and the formula for that end, which is the best which was ever coined, was Locke's formulation: comfortable self-preservation.[46] [¶ 33] A second difference: the common people, the nonphilosophers, can become enlightened. The philosophic-scientific teaching does no longer remain a *preserve* of a so-called intellectual elite, but is spread, is broadcast, and transforms the whole citizen body. Science becomes for the first time a *public* power. It becomes a public power because it forms the minds of large masses of men.

[¶ 34] Now, what is the situation of our problem at this stage? Hobbes, whose construction is still the clearest and most lucid in existence, starts from a very massive fact which has very much to do with toleration, namely, fear of violent death, because persecution naturally culminates in killing people. Violent death is the greatest evil and this must be avoided by government, i.e., peace at all costs is a fundamental condition, and this of course requires strong government. I mean, whenever government is divided, there will be all kinds of frictions, legal delays, and so on. *Unqualified* sovereignty—and he preferred monarchy, i.e., absolute monarchy. Religion owes its legal power *only* to the uncontrolled and uncontrollable act of the sovereign. Say, if Christianity is an established religion in England, that is due to an act of British kings or kings and Parliament and not to any intrinsic truth which it might have. The sovereign can determine *which* religion is to be established as he sees fit. This means of course also that he can *disestablish* it as he sees fit. The Christian is obliged in conscience to commit idolatrous and blasphemous acts if his sovereign so commands because obedience to the sovereign is *the* fundamental duty.

And now comes the interesting turn: the sovereign may establish or disestablish any religion he pleases, but he is not *obliged* to establish *any* religion, any public worship which as such would be uniform. He *may*, as Hobbes puts it, allow "many sorts of worship." Many sorts of worship. In that case, however, he goes on, and it is extremely interesting, "it cannot be said that the commonwealth is of any religion at all."[47] Why? Because there is no public religion, no established religion. The consequence is that Hobbes admits at this passage—a unique passage in this work, but an important one—that an *irreligious* commonwealth is possible. Or to state it quite bluntly, an atheistic society is possible. This is one of the greatest events in the history of thought proper.

Three years after Hobbes's death, a French writer, Pierre Bayle, published a book, *Pensées diverses* [*sur la comète*], diverse thoughts on a certain comet which had appeared, and which spells out what in Hobbes is only

once mentioned. I must say a few words about this book, which I think is one the most important works in this whole development. Bayle opposes the belief that comets are omens, a belief still very strong in the seventeenth century, but an issue which we would all regard as extremely trivial. Now, he gives eight reasons why comets are not [omens]—it's a large book, 400 or 500 pages. Eight reasons. The seventh[48] reason is a *theological* reason, and the only theological reason which he adduces against the belief in the comets. He argues as follows: if comets were evil omens, God would have made miracles in order to confirm *idolatry*. If they are omens, if they say something, then they are not merely natural events, they are miracles. And since comets were used in pagan antiquity and in China for idolatrous purposes, God—you see that is a very neat piece of theological reasoning—God would have made miracles in order to confirm idolatry. But then here comes an objection: but God might very well have confirmed idolatry because it is a *lesser* evil than *atheism*. That the Greeks or the Chinese are idolaters is better than that they were atheists. Then a response, Bayle's response, to this objection is the following: he denies that atheism is necessarily such an evil. Atheism does not necessarily lead to immorality. And in this connection he does something. He proves, or he attempts to prove, the possibility of an atheistic society. It is an enormous step. Atheism is altogether innocent. I can't suppress mentioning his theological argument proper, which is taken from the analogy of *human* jealousy. Opposed to idolatry is God's jealousy. He says a husband is less jealous if his wife does not love any man, including himself, than if she loves another man [laughter].[49] You know, he uses the old principle of analogy for his very novel purpose.

[¶ 35] Now this epoch-making event, which is connected with the names of Hobbes and Bayle, remained, however, *subterraneous* and did not in any way affect public policy or public discussions until the nineteenth century, when an open atheistic propagation with a political or social purpose came into [the] open, especially of course in socialism and communism. But something took place, say, between 1670 roughly and the French Revolution, which met the eye and the grounds of which were not discerned by everyone, but the men who were responsible for it knew it very well. In other words, that part of the iceberg which became visible was a technique, the technique of the enlightenment of these philosophers. Two rules: *multiply* sects, and *deflect* the attention of men from the otherworldly goals to this-worldly goals. The empirical basis, the Dutch Republic, which was the model, regarded as the model, because

of religious tolerance: every sect can have freedom in Holland and they are getting richer and richer, whereas the Spanish monarchy gets poorer and poorer from day to day [laughter]. So there is a connection, a connection between these two things: multiplication of sects plus economics, we can say. That was the technique of these men who steered this big conspiracy, I think we can say, of the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century.

Now the great political philosophers of that age (of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), apart from Hobbes, do not of course go so far as Hobbes and Bayle do. I mention these three names: Locke, famous fighter for tolerance, but severe limitation—surely no tolerance for atheists, explicitly. In his case, not even for Catholics. That had of course to do with the British settlement. Spinoza: a state religion in a republic, absolutely necessary. The state religion must be based on either the Old Testament or the Old and New Testaments taken together, so the Jews and Christians are all right. Naturally, he gives an extremely great freedom of interpretation—for example, everyone must believe that God exists; but he may just say that *matter* is God; then he complies. In other words, it is almost zero but still, legally no toleration for atheists. That's important. And the last great man of this tradition, Rousseau, who as everyone knows demanded a *civil* religion as absolutely necessary, and he has been accused by some people who know nothing *prior* to Rousseau, and know only nineteenth-century liberalism, that he was a terrible totalitarian and I don't know what, whereas he was in this respect only the last relic, so to say, of the older view.[50] Good.

So in other words, in this great period, the formative period of modern times, there is a considerable modification of the overall understanding but clearly no freedom of irreligion. Tolerance means for all practical purposes tolerance for every religion, but not for *irreligion*. I believe one has to take this into account if one wants to understand the First Amendment because the First Amendment and the American Constitution altogether are after all a product of the eighteenth century, or the great authorities there; the philosophical authorities are all men of the eighteenth century. I believe one has to consider this very seriously. The question of what all individuals responsible for the Constitution, for the Federalist Papers, but for the Constitution as a whole, thought privately is utterly uninteresting; the point is what they could publicly defend. This would have to be considered. Now of course in the nineteenth century, it seems, freedom became *unlimited*, unlimited, and this is a tradition to which people defer.

[¶ 36] Now let us look for one moment at the greatest representative of free libertarianism in the nineteenth century, and that is, as I believe everyone would admit, John Stuart Mill. But let us not look at *On Liberty*; let us look at his *Autobiography*. I must bore you with a few quotations:

I was brought up from the first without any religious belief, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. My father, educated in the creed of Scotch Presbyterianism, had by his own studies and reflections been early led to reject not only the belief in revelation, but the foundations of what is commonly called Natural Religion. . . .

[His father's] aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term [LS: Do you see the hedging? I am not simply irreligious only in the sense usually attached to the term] was of the same kind with that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality. I am thus one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it [laughter]. I grew up in a negative state in relation to it. [LS: Obviously even in England he will not be so rare today.] This point in my early education had, however, incidentally one bad consequence deserving notice. In giving me an opinion contrary to that of the world, my father thought it necessary to give it as one which could not prudently be avowed to the world. This lesson of keeping my thoughts to myself, at that early age, was attended with some moral disadvantages [in the original: "could not but be morally prejudicial"].[51]

One more point, and then I am through with these quotations and almost through with my lecture, when he was running for Parliament, much later, of course:

A well-known literary man was heard to say that the Almighty himself would have no chance of being elected on such a programme [LS: That on which he ran]. I strictly adhered to it, neither spending money nor canvassing, nor did I take any personal part in the election, until about a week preceding the day of nomination, when I attended a few public meetings to state my principles and give answers to any questions which the electors might exercise their just right of putting to me for their own guidance, answers as plain and unreserved as my Address. On one subject only, my religious opinions, I announced from the beginning that I would answer no questions; a determination which appeared to be completely approved by those who attended the meetings.[52] [laughter]

Exceedingly interesting, how the freedom of religion—or from religion, rather—which Mill exercised as distinguished from what he demanded in his *On Liberty*, was still along the lines of Locke, Spinoza, and Rousseau, rather than of John Dewey.

[¶ 37] I'll summarize that point. What is *the* issue? The issue seems to be this: Does the commonwealth require religion for its well-being, and may it therefore legitimately demand from every citizen that he has *some* religion, i.e., that he believes in God? Or can an atheistic society be a good society? I would like to define atheistic society lest there be any doubt. Of course, there is no society in which all members are atheists. [¶ 38] An atheistic society is a "society in which no public governmental act and no publicly supported act has any reference whatsoever to god—this is a clear case in the USSR—or in which no man suffers from *any* politically relevant disability, as distinguished from a mere legal disability, on the ground of his professed atheism."[53]

[¶ 39] What is uppermost in our minds is a question, a question of American constitutional law, namely, the correct interpretation of the First Amendment. Does the freedom of religion mean freedom for all *religions*, but *only* for them, or does it give an equal freedom *from* all religions? I believe that it is impossible to settle this legal question of utmost gravity if one does not settle first the theoretical question, the discussion of which we have begun tonight. This is all I have.

[Applause] [Tape change]

Strauss: And just not standing on ceremony, he or she who has a ready question, indicate so by any means short of firecrackers [laughter].

Student: Do you believe that a public support of religion can be as influential today when there are so many sources of irreligion in society? Do you believe that a public support of religion can be effective today as compared to, let's say the past, where society was quite different?

Strauss: This is a very complicated question, but I believe it is not the first question. The first question is: Is it desirable? And that is the question that one must really have before one's mind's eye: an atheistic society as defined, and a nonatheistic society. And say, let it—well, of course, we take a nonatheistic society as we *wish* it, not necessarily like one in the past which may have been defective on a thousand grounds. That is the question. And then the question of whether any legal compulsion, whether any use, is an entirely different [one]—but there are—for example, in this question the famous case which I do not wish to touch, not

being a trained constitutional lawyer, I mean the prayer in public schools, this is an example of what the practical issues are.[54] You see, it was an old maxim of wise men of the past that legislation can only follow a certain state of preparedness of public opinion. By public opinion, I don't mean what the Gallup Poll means, but the settled convictions, not necessarily coming out in questionnaires, on which people habitually act. You know?

Same Student: It would seem to be desirable to support religion publicly, and that—it would—working on that premise, the gravity of the question would depend—well, the gravity of the issue of whether religion should be publicly supported or not depends in part on the effectiveness of the public support of religion, and there are many people who would deny that the school prayer or something of this sort can have real effect on the training of children when there are so many other things—

Strauss: These things cannot be weighed, they cannot be measured. No one can know what a certain phrase heard, stated drowsily, repeated drowsily, but remembered in a key moment of one's life, would mean. Now if this phrase was never heard, it will not be remembered. Even Stalin remembered—in a conversation with Churchill, I remember—when they spoke about the Great War situation, and he said something like this, "God helps!"[55] Well, he of course had gone even to a priest seminary and so had a more than ordinary religious education. But you know what I mean; I am speaking now not exactly of habitual and thoughtless use, but in certain moments, if there is such an expression, any others I don't want to do that but I think I tried … the imagination of every one of you. That is unfathomable, unpredictable even, because these are all seeds, and whether the seeds will go up depends not only on the soil, also on the weather, and who can know that? I believe that all these methods, the quantitative methods, I don't think they make any allowance for these depths, although they even have now I hear depth interview [laughter]. But this depth is of course a relative depth, maybe what depth psychology means by depth. That may not be true depth. So that one cannot say. I think one must face first this question whether—I know there are people who would say if there were no religion whatever anymore, no one would go to any synagogue or church and no one would ever pray and one … and bless births and wedding and burial would be—would be a relief for the world. I am sure that Lord [Bertrand] Russell thinks along these lines. And he is not the only one, quite a few people. But all right! But one must really figure it out. One must look at it detachedly and soberly: How would this affect human beings, and all kinds of human beings?

And the other way—and if this is not a desirable thing, if this is not a desirable thing, then one must see: Well, what can one do? Is it possible that any governmental action in the widest sense—not necessarily legal actions; you know there are also certain things which are simply done in statements by leading statesmen and so on, as what could be done, what could be implemented. In any case, the decision, either way, has effects in unexpected quarters. Unexpected quarters. And that I would say is the primary question. This raises questions of immense practical importance but as with all practical questions, it presupposes somehow a theoretical decision. Mr. [Donald] Reinken?[56]

Reinken: To ask what is perhaps the other half of that gentleman's question: Where would the area of the greatest expense and cost be, if it is taken seriously, of reestablishing a state-established religion believing in a providential god?

Strauss: The established religion—religion in the strict sense, as you mean it when you speak of established, means of course a *particular* religion. To mention the two examples in this country, Christianity and Judaism—because I think we can disregard Islam in spite of the Black Muslims.

Student: No, I didn't mean putting Cardinal Spellman[57] in the White House, but something milder, taking—we already have "In God We Trust" on the currency. God is known to be Mammon, by the religious people (Strauss: inaudible [laughter]) but reversing the trend away from the prayers in the public functions to make it essentially politically impossible for people to succeed in public life without avowing a trust in a providential god—what some have called the "first church of your choice" religion.

Strauss: But still, whatever this may be—I mean, if it is a religion, it is surely a belief in a providential god, isn't it? And the question is simply not the question of the establishment of any *particular* religion, it is a question of, to what extent—I think the simplest statement of the problem as it has frequently been stated is: Does the First Amendment mean freedom for *all* religions, or does it also include freedom *from* religion? That is the question. Of course, there is another point—I should have looked it up, remind me, Mr. Anastaplo, even admitting that it means only freedom *for* religion, what about the freedom of *speech*? Maybe the freedom of speech would protect irreligious speech as much as religious speech, and therefore we would be up against a similar difficulty, that is quite true. Yes?

Student: Doctor, I wonder if, once we accept the principle that freedom of religion, meaning freedom to practice any religion in a state—I wonder if perhaps—

Strauss: By the way, with some qualifications. Mormons. But they are trivial, they are not …

Same Student: I wonder if that does not imply that in the eyes of the state, that one religion is as good as another. This isn't the implication of that?

Strauss: I believe that at the moment that is abandoned, I believe the state would then cease to be a liberal state proper. I mean, that I believe is really meant from the very beginning, that there must not be any identification of the state with any particular religion.

Same Student: Well, if that is the case, doesn't it follow logically, or does it follow logically that freedom of religion, implying that in the eyes of the state one religion is the equal of another, doesn't that follow that it is freedom from religion?

Strauss: No. Because the example, for example, of Thomas More already prior to the modern development proper shows that. There can be something which one can loosely call (but sufficiently precise for practical purposes) a rational religion. You know, today the term has become discredited, and today people speak of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. That is a historical term roughly for this. Perhaps naturally the term religion would also have included quite a few pagans who did not share in the Hebrew-Christian tradition. That I think is the practical issue today. I believe no one has the intention of establishing any religion, even Christianity in general—you know, as distinguished from the difference between Catholicism on the one hand, and any Protestant variety on the other. This is not the issue.

Well, of course, I deliberately didn't go into one very big question which indeed belongs to a theoretical consideration but not to the constitutional consideration. And that is whatever the law, including the constitutional law, may say, the state of mind of the citizen is at least as important. You know? So that, for example, in say, around—in 1800 there would be no question that the overwhelming majority of American citizens were practicing Christians. While not a *legal* fact, it was politically immensely important. Well, if you remember the last election, when for the first time a non-Protestant became president of the United States. And you know how politically relevant the nonlegal—I mean not the illegal, but the nonlegal—facts are. I mean, that is, I believe, what political

sociology is concerned with, you know, these kinds of things which do not appear in law but are very powerful politically. Into this, I didn't go; which of course we should also consider. But I suppose that today the fact that a *considerable* minority of the American people is no longer either Christian or Jewish in any religiously relevant sense of course has created this underlying present situation. I mean, I don't believe that you can state these things very clearly in statistical terms, but this is, I think, the basis, something again, a nonlegal fact, a nonlegal fact as possible under the Constitution, as in the other cases the whole population would adhere to one and the same particular religion—which is of course equally possible legally, and yet it would give society an entirely different character than it has in the two cases. One has surely to consider both possibilities: what one might call the religiously homogenous liberal democracy, and an atheistic liberal democracy. Both are theoretically possible. One should consider that. Although in fact, I believe, the liberal democracies are all in countries which are not religiously homogenous. Is it not true? Or did I forget anything? Surely Holland has a considerable Catholic minority, Britain has a smaller one, but on the other hand a large variety of Protestant sects—where do you, pardon?

Reinken: Scandinavia, where the church—

Strauss: That is correct. Scandinavian countries are so to speak religiously homogenous—Protestant, Lutheran.

Reinken: But very diluted, they are almost gone now.

Strauss: But there because a large part of the population is no longer *really* Christian. And that would be an interesting object of study, how this change occurred—you know, not political change in the narrower sense of the term but of course decisive for the character of the society. Yes? Oh no, this lady was first, I'm sorry.

Student: What theoretical difficulty would you see in a position that it's possible to have a well-ordered and viable society which has … a public ethics assisting, without—the obligation of which lies solely and strictly in teleological goals decided upon by the society at large, a strictly—an ethics that is only good so long as the society could decide on certain goals, and which would be changed if the goals were altered.

Strauss: But what kind of goals? Cannibalism?

Same Student: No, let us say a society were to form goals that are very much similar to the goals many people say our nation has got now.

Strauss: So you say decent goals. That's a great difference. All right. But let us assume decent goals; but then the question is this: Is the dedication

of the society to decent goals and I suppose also of the *serious* part of the population—otherwise society consists of individuals—is this sufficient, humanly sufficient? You doubtless have heard, and probably know much more about this than I do, about the fact which is sometimes called insecurity—insecurity, which even decent people have—and loneliness—you know, loneliness and this kind of thing. So I think in order to be realistic you would have to say: dedication to decent goals plus psychiatry, because psychiatry would then be the only way in which these problems of the individual, which are not solved by this dedication to decent goals, would be solved. Now I don't say that this is a *complete* picture, but I believe it is somewhat more complete than the one that you drew: decent goals, say, social welfare, socialism or, you know, welfare state plus psychiatry. This we have to some extent; we are on the way to it.[58] But again the question is: "Is this what one can be *satisfied* with?" would be the question. One would have to face that.

Same Student: Could one add that perhaps a public ethics based on mutual goals with the addition that there is a complete and total freedom to be both religious and irreligious …

Strauss: I couldn't hear the last part of it.

Same Student: Adding that one could have whatever religion privately one chose to one's personal—

Strauss: But this is I believe not the question because that is understood according to any interpretation of the First Amendment, that the Constitution does not prescribe to any individual which religion he or she has. There are other questions which are more subtle into which I cannot go; there is a limit to every discussion. For example, there are people who say that Buddhism, for example, strictly understood is an atheistic religion. I mean, in other words, it is not mere—how shall I say?—spiritual emptiness, but it is something spiritual and yet it is atheistic. That I have heard. Now, this would have to be considered, this kind of thing; and especially I hear there is now in some circles in the United States a great movement, numerically probably not very strong, in favor of Zen Buddhism. Have you heard of that? I have heard of it [laughter]. But still, if one wants to have a complete picture, one must without any fastidiousness take into consideration all these kinds of things. My promise was a very limited one: to state what the fundamental issue is which one has to face if one wants to reach clarity about a seemingly purely legal constitutional law question. If I may repeat this once more, the interpretation of the Constitution, as I learned from a very thorough study by Mr. Anastaplo, which I

had the pleasure to read, comes always up against the question: What was in the minds of the founding fathers? Now, this can be *partly* established of course by their explicit utterances, but since they were not strictly speaking theoretical men, then one must find that out to some extent by studying the theorists who influenced them. Well, Locke is of course always mentioned in this connection, but perhaps others also have to be considered. In brief, the state of political philosophy and its latitudes which were limited in the late eighteenth century. You agree with that, don't you? And this is what I tried to supply to some extent. Mr. [Charles] Butterworth.[59]

Butterworth: What would be, if any, the grounds for reconciliation between the philosophical view that says "no one religion is true" and the religious view which says "our religious view is the truth"?

Strauss: No—practical reconciliation, practical forbearance, no theoretical reconciliation, as I believe. I mean, there are all kinds of things—for example, take perhaps the most famous case: Hegel who said *the* philosophic system has shown *the* truth of the Christian dogma. But by this very fact, of course, he transformed the Christian dogma into a philosophic theorem where all nonphilosophic things were dismissed as merely imaginary irrelevancies. You know? There are also Jews who have done the same thing. But this, I think, conceals the issue. The older view, the simple older view, that there is natural reason and there is suprarational revelation, which of course would not be accepted by [the] philosopher as suprarational, but yet by virtue of the clear distinction keeps at least alive the problem and doesn't *conceal* it by a sham identification. Yes?

Student: An extension of that question: if the political philosopher is in principle a nonbeliever, yet on the other hand somehow in principle has governing responsibilities in the society, doesn't his status, so to speak, as a nonbeliever point the way for an atheistic society? Is there some kind of unbridgeable gap between the political philosopher and the—

Strauss: That is a long question. In practice, all kinds of combinations are possible. But this may very well be due to the human and all-too-human desire to eat the cake and have it. But if we speak now about serious men—I mean men who take *intellectual* responsibility—I think that is perfectly clear that the philosopher—I mean, I refer you to Thomas Aquinas himself—that philosophy as philosophy is not dependent on faith. I mean, that is a kind of *fideistic* view which Pascal may have had and other people, but which surely is not the Thomistic view. There is a sphere in which human reason can exert itself, and that is of course meant

by the word "philosophy" or "science" and political philosophy is a part of it. Now the key controversy is this: Is the sphere of philosophy so *essentially incomplete*, while being autonomous in itself, that it *points* toward its completion in revelation? And if I understand Thomas well, he says that's the case, it is incomplete and points toward this completion. But by the fact that Thomas teaches that and acts on that teaching also theoretically, he is a theologian who uses philosophy, and one can perhaps say he is a better philosopher than other philosophers are. That is probably what you would say. But it is still something which is no longer possible on the basis of philosophy as such, and since even all proof of the defects of philosophy, the defectiveness of philosophy, are of no great help if you do not get the supplement, and since this supplement is accessible *only* on the basis of faith, the conclusion follows.

Same Student: Assuming that you don't get this supplement, I think, I got the impression in your lecture that you suggest that political philosophy as such implies nonbelief. Admitting that Thomistic philosophy suggests—points to something more, and you don't get that something more; and also assuming that the political philosopher has some governing responsibility to the community.

Strauss: But he can fulfill that only on the basis of human reason. And I would say that, and I believe that Thomas Aquinas would say, that the guidance which political philosophy gives for the commonweal is genuine guidance as far as it goes, I mean for this-worldly ends.

Same Student: But won't that guidance necessarily be in conflict with the civil religion, assuming the political philosopher is a nonbeliever and this is a principle?

Strauss: Why should that be? Well, if you take even the doctrine of Rousseau, what does it amount to? That there are sanctions, superhuman sanctions for morality; the content of the morality is entirely determined by human reason. I mean, I do not wish to—the very contrary, I wish to make as clear as possible that there are real questions there, but I would say *these* are the real questions, not some which are ordinarily discussed. And I would like to add one point, which I said already at the beginning: some of you may have seen that I am not a 100% liberal. But the liberal position is today, at least in modern academic circles, almost omnipotent. Now, this position, the liberal position surely, is based on philosophy alone—I mean, they don't call it philosophy anymore, but if you use the term unassisted human mind alone. I mean, the social sciences are not in any way based on revelation in any sense; I believe there is a universal

Transcript 7.2

LEO STRAUSS, "RELIGION AND THE COMMONWEAL": THE MANUSCRIPT (1963)

Editorial Note: This transcript is an edited version of a manuscript found in the Leo Strauss Papers.[1] Numbers in square brackets, inserted by the editors, refer to the page numbers of the manuscript, numbers in square brackets preceded by ¶, also inserted by the editors, refer to the paragraph numbers; all underlined words have been converted to italics; crossed out words and handwritten insertions are mentioned in the footnotes; the abbreviated title of the books and names are everywhere replaced by their full forms.

[1] *Religion and the Commonweal* lecture to be delivered at Hillel on 27.1.1963

1.[2] This is the first time that I have the honor to give a lecture in Hillel House after the death of my friend Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky. Permit me to pay homage to his memory. The soul and substance of Rabbi Pekarsky was Jewish piety, simple old-fashioned, chaste, Jewish piety. He dedicated his life to keeping alive this holy fire, or to revive[3] it. He knew very well how difficult this task was in the middle of the twentieth century—especially at a university like ours. He acted in this difficult situation with singular tact and prudence. He did not protest against those who tried to reduce Judaism to social ethics on the one hand, and to an ethnic culture on the other, since both parties retain a part, however small, of the ancient truth and since their very antagonism—the antagonism between the universal and the particular points to the full truth: the chosen people, the people chosen to be witness of justice. He did not rebuff, nay he attracted those who were not as blessed as he was, who had not succeeded in finding a

way of reconciling the old piety and the new science, for he was united with them in love of truth. This was indeed the limit of his tolerance and forbearance: He barely tolerated (for he was a very polite man) those for whom the university is above all a place for promoting themselves. I believe that he would have approved of the effort of Mr. Anastaplo and his friends—which is to explore how one can secure, by human means, the future of religion without infringing on the rights of man.

2. I speak as a social scientist. A social scientist is a man who is sworn to face and pronounce also unpleasant truths—unpleasant to himself. There are two kinds of unpleasant truths, unpleasant truths which are at the same time pleasant, and simply unpleasant truths. As for the former: it is not altogether unpleasant for a friend of big businesses to point out the unpleasant power of the labor unions, nor for a friend of the labor unions to point out the unpleasant power of big businesses: these are pleasant facts for them, facts on which they thrive. The truly unpleasant facts are those which render questionable one's party line—like Yalta for the professional liberal and strong central government with a terrific defense budget for the professional conservative. It is in this spirit that I approach my subject: what does the tradition of political philosophy teach regarding religion and the commonweal.

3. Voltaire has said: celui qui n'ose regarder fixement les deux pôles de la vie, la religion et le government, n'est qu'un lâche. In the language of our time: the two poles of life are the *sub*-cultural, and the *supra*-cultural: two *stern* things, as *distinguished* from culture. If we understand politics and religion in *terms* of culture, we obscure the fundamental difficulty. Government is necessarily particular—religion at least according to its intention universal. By looking at everything from the point of view of culture, we forget the universal, the truly human, for culture, as now used, is essentially particular.

4. If we were to follow this thought, we might be compelled to question the concept of religion too. "Religion" is not a Hebrew term nor a Greek term—piety is—but is religion the same as piety? But let us not be, or appear to be, pedantic. Let us say, as we are entitled to say by the[4] Western tradition, that religion is all human concern with a personal God, with a God who thinks and wills and is concerned with man, with every man, or to use a current felicitous[5] phrase, who is a Thou.

5. As for the political philosophy in the title of my lecture, I have made its meaning sufficiently clear for our present purpose[6] by speaking of the

tradition of political philosophy; it is something which is not exactly thriving in our age—not in spite but because of the fact that the word is more frequently used today than it was ever in the past. (Cf. "historic event" = events which make headlines today but prove to be utterly irrelevant the next year or at best next year)

6. Yet: the present discussions are *based*, whether the discussants are aware of it or not, on political philosophy—this is true especially of the *liberal* position : the liberal position is based not on *religion* (Jewish *or* Christian) *but* on the unassisted human mind alone—and hence philosophy.

[2] 7. One thing one can say while being reasonably certain that it will be permitted to pass by everyone is this: political philosophy emerged in Greece, and the classical document of Greek political philosophy is Aristotle's *Politics*. What do we learn from *Aristotle* on our subject? *Politics* VII (1328b): ἔργα essential to the πόλις—6 of them in ascending order—from food up to government—"fifth—first: the concern regarding the divine."

8. Implies: 1) no πόλις possible without religion, without *established* religion—*state*-religion obligatory for all citizens. Cf. EN V τὸ φύσει δίκαιον → sacrifice and prayer de iure naturali—

9. 2) This is πως πρῶτον: more necessary even than food (or higher even than human government)—but in other respect is *not* the first—τὸ θεῖον is merely higher than anything ἀνθρώπινον—but: this *kind* of concern (≠ *knowledge* of the divine) is *not* the highest nor the most fundamental—explained in Sefer lambda: the popular notions contain an element of truth—but: *additions* to pure truth "for the persuasion of the many and for the use in regard to the laws and useful"—the laws need a kind of superhuman support—they cannot be simply rational or reasonable (≠ τέχνη—*Politics* II on Hippodamus)—religion is *civil* religion—or: *civil* theology (≠ philosophic theology)

10. This view not peculiar to Aristotle—Cf. Plato (*Republic* and *Timaeus*): rule of *philosophers* (≠ rule of *priests*)—and all other classic philosophers—

11. The example: the case of Socrates—the charge—how interpreted by Plato: the gods worshiped by the city *are not*—Socrates did not *preach* that—and: he does not meet the charge—he somehow claims that he is *not* guilty as charged—that he is innocently condemned (his laughing remark to Apollodorus)—but he *is* guilty as charged: he cannot deny the πόλις the right to demand that νομίζειν—his *sole* reservation: he will not obey a ban of πόλις prohibiting him to *philosophize*—his justification: *Apollo* has *commanded* him to philosophize—but what did Apollo truly say?

12. Plato's attempt to solve the problem of harmonizing philosophy and πόλις—a) the philosopher-kings b) *Leges* 7: the cosmic gods ≠ the Olympian gods

13. But were there not *radicals* among the classical philosophers? *Liberals*? Some people say that they were—e.g. *agnostic* Protagoras—but: he did not engage in propagating this view—or Epicurus-Burke: "Boldness formerly was not the character of Atheists as such. They were even of a character nearly the reverse; they were formerly like the old Epicureans, rather an unenterprising race. But of late they are grown active, designing, turbulent, and seditious."

14. λάθε βιώσας—no political philosophy proper, for no public spiritedness.

15. Summary on classical political philosophy: no religion is true but some religion *any* religion is necessary—law and morality are insufficient for the large majority of men—obedience to the law and morality are insufficient for making men happy (the happiness of the wicked, the misery of the just): need for supplementation by divine reward and punishment—the *true* supplement is philosophy—but philosophy is essentially a preserve of the few: special φύσις required

16. Religion is not the work of philosophers but of founders-legislators—yet philosophy can, and should, influence or modify religion—while indispensable to πόλις, religion also creates *dangers* to πόλις—e.g. earthquakes etc. as omina → panics in armies (Cicero, *Republic* I)—or: generals at the battle of Arginusae (not the shipwrecked but the corpses)—no fighting on Sabbath—asylum to murderers [at temple] and altar—today: birth control

17. Yehuda Halevi: the philosophers (≠ religion) do not recognize a single rule of conduct which is universally valid—

18. Influence of philosophy on religion: fairly liberal religious policies in practice (cf. Pericles ~ Anaxagoras) but: no *legal* guarantee (= *freedom* of religion)

19. The danger is not the πόλις repressing religious freedom (this they do not even desire) but undue influence of religion or priests of πόλις—religious repression, i.e. uniformity is a *need*—*true* concern with the θεὶς is *knowledge* of the whole (≠ prayers and sacrifices)—gulf between philosopher and δῆμος: their τέλη differ—intermediate group between philosopher and δῆμος: the πεπαιδευμένοι, the gentlemen: *urban patrician* →[7]

[3] 20. A word on political *theology*—quid sit [the footnote attached to "quid sit" written below the page:] *one* particular religion is the *true* religion—Judaism: does not demand of all men to become Jews but only those born from a Jewish mother—Christianity: demands from all men but tolerates Jews with great disabilities—Islam: tolerates Jews and Christians with considerable civil disabilities—

21. Does the Jewish position entail recognition of the right to be *ir*religious:

חסיד אומות העולם[8]

They have a share in the world to come (=are saved)

(≠ nulla salus extra Ecclesiam)

22. Rambam: limits it to non-Jews who recognize and perform the 7 Noahide commandments *on the basis of Mosaic revelation*, i.e. Christians and Muslims—(≠ Pagans, including pagan philosophers)

23. Cf. Psalms 9: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God … Arise, O LORD – let not man prevail – let the heathen be judged in thy sight."

24. The fundamental difficulty from this basis: what is better, *no* religion or a *false* religion? Atheism or a living faith in Moloch?

25. The *true* religion is known as such only by revelation (≠ reason or nature) → no natural obligation to worship and to love God—Thomas Aquinas: not reason simply but reason informed by faith teaches that God should be loved and worshiped—

26. Thomas (≠ Aristotle): divine worship is *not* de iure naturali—for: natural theology (= natural *knowledge* of god's existence etc.) does not lead to the insight that God *alone* must be worshipped—(for: eternity of the world, the heavenly bodies—= cosmic gods)

27. Freedom of religion as a right, as it is recognized in the First Amendment is something specifically *modern*—especially in the interpretation according to which freedom of religion includes the freedom of *ir*religion. But is not freedom of religion in the *widest* meaning simply the right of the conscience, which includes the right of the *erring* conscience? a) "conscience" is not a *philosophic* conception but stems from Christian theology—hence does not belong to tradition of political philosophy—b) freedom of erring conscience ≠ freedom of the false religion = full legal right for it, including its propagation—and: one must entirely divorce the ecclesiastical teaching according to which the erring conscience *binds* (≠ gives rights) from consideration of ecclesiastical practice.

28. One can say however that freedom of religion is an *indirect* consequence of Reformation—religious wars etc. → toleration—also: certain *sects* from the very beginning—but this is not political *philosophy*—but *prior* to Reformation or at any rate independently of it, certain modifications of classical political philosophy—

29. Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516)—the established religion is *the* natural or rational religion—but everyone is free to add to it of his own—no one can be persecuted on the account of his religion, everyone may follow the religion which he likes except that no one who does not believe in the immortality of souls and in providence can be a citizen—nor may he defend his views in public coram vulgo (≠ priests, viri graves)—but no punishment for this—the public cult is uniform but does not violate anything peculiar to any man's private religion (e.g. no prayers which cannot be said by everyone) → the society united in and by *the* true religion of reason—tolerates additions to it but no subtraction

30. *Machiavelli*—public religion indispensable for *republics* but in absolute monarchy: the power of the prince may supply to the want of religion—an irreligious republic is impossible (→ Spinoza) → enlightened despotism: whose descendant is *Hobbes*.

[4] 31. The change effected by Machiavelli and Hobbes is fundamental; it concerns *the relation of philosophy and πόλις*—

32. a) scientia propter potentiam—the relief of man's estate → the τέλος of the philosopher and the δῆμος is identical ("comfortable self-preservation"[9])

33. b) the δῆμος can be *enlightened*—*diffusion* of scientific knowledge—science becomes a public *power*

34. The difficulty in Hobbes: danger of violent death as the greatest evil → peace at all costs → unqualified sovereignty, preferably absolute monarchy—religion owes its legal power *only* to the uncontrolled act of the sovereign—he can determine *which* religion is to be established as he sees fit—but: he can *dis*establish it—the Christian is obliged in his conscience to commit idolatrous and blasphemous acts if his sovereign so commands—but: the sovereign is not *obliged* to establish any public worship which as such is uniform—he *may* allow "many sorts of worship": in that case "It cannot be said that the commonwealth is of any religion at all"—→ an irreligious commonwealth is possible—an *atheistic* society is possible. Bayle, *Pensées Diverses*—1682 explicitly against the belief that comets are omena—8 reasons—the 7th[10] reason is the only *theological* reason: if comets were evil omens, God would have made miracles in order

to confirm *idolatry*—an objection: but God might have confirmed idolatry because it is greater [*sic*; recte: lesser] evil than atheism—response to that objection: atheism does not necessarily lead to immorality → *proof of possibility of atheistic society*—atheism is altogether innocent—the theological argument proper: taken from the analogy of *human* jealousy: the husband is less jealous if his wife does not love any man including himself than if she loves another man (God).

35. This epoch making event remained *subterraneous* until 19th century (especially socialism)—but the *visible* thing—[11] the teachings of enlightenment of the philosophers: multiplication of sects (—toleration, Dutch example) plus economics (= this worldly goals to be preferred to those of the other world)—the greatest political philosophers do not go as far as Hobbes-Bayle: Locke (toleration excludes Catholics, atheists), Spinoza (the 7 dogmas—but liberty of interpretation—e.g. God exists = matter exists), JJ: religion civile

36. John Stuart Mill—perfect freedom in theory—what about practice? What about *his* practice? *Autobiography* 32, 34. 36, 37, 240

37. *The* issue: does the commonwealth require religion for its wellbeing and may it therefore legitimately demand from every citizen that he has some religion, or that he believes in God *or* can an atheistic society be a good society?

38. An atheist society—"[12]society in which no public (governmental) act and no publicly supported act has any reference whatever to God (cf. USSR) or in which no man suffers from any politically relevant discrimination (≠ legal discrimination) on the ground of his professed atheism"

39. What is uppermost in our minds is the question of American constitutional law—the correct interpretation of the First Amendment—does the freedom of religion mean freedom for *all* religions but only for them—or does it give freedom *from* all religion? I believe that it is impossible to settle this legal question if we do not settle first the *theoretical* question, the discussion of which we begin tonight.

Notes

1. Leo Strauss Papers, box 18, folder 13, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

2. In many cases, it is impossible to say with confidence where a new paragraph begins and ends in the ms. and the editors had to rely on their fallible judgment. The important point is that Strauss did not, unlike many of his other mss., number his paragraphs, hence the division of the text into paragraphs does not seem to be crucial.

3. “awaken” is crossed out and replaced with “revive.”

4. In the ms. “our” is crossed out and replaced with “the.”

5. The term “felicitous” is difficult to read.

6. “for our present purpose” is added over the sentence.

7. An illegible word after the arrow is crossed out.

8. In “ḥasidei ummot ha’olam,” the first word “ḥasidei” (the pious, righteous) is underlined.

9. The closing quotation mark is not in the ms.

10. “7” is underlined.

11. The dash seems to mean “is.”

12. The opening quotation mark is illegible but it seems to be necessary from the closing quotation mark. Strauss seems to be giving a definition of the atheistic society.

Svetozar Y. Minkov

Appendix

STRAUSS'S CONFRONTATION WITH PASCAL

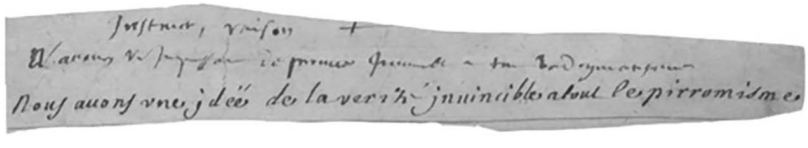
A VOLUME ON STRAUSS ON RELIGION would no doubt profit from a consideration of Strauss's study of St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, and other luminaries of religious thought (one could add here, on the Christian side alone, Marsilius of Padua, Thomas More, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, St. Newman, C. S. Lewis). This could easily become the subject of several other volumes. As a kind of appetizer, we include below Strauss's confrontation with Pascal. The notes belong to a period when Strauss was teaching and studying Pascal, partly with a view to writing another book on Baruch Spinoza, so that Strauss could develop his discussion of the alleged "moral superficiality" of the philosophers or their blindness to the meaning of diversion or distraction, as well as the issue of causality and nature as divine "habit" or "custom."

As will become clear in the transcript below, the word for Strauss's engagement with Pascal should indeed be "confrontation." Such a confrontation is, to be sure, only possible on the basis of very high regard: see this remark in the spring 1959 course on Cicero: "There was a man called Pascal, who lived with the notion that there are abysses right here where he sits. Neurotic? Well, to which one might very well say (and I believe one must say) that while this may have been in the literal sense exaggerated, Pascal's was a much healthier mind than those who do not see abysses anywhere, because he faced the crisis; whereas a kind of mental health which is based on the assumption that crises do not happen, or that they will not happen to me, or this kind of thing, is of course a very superficial health."[1] In the same course, there are two other significant references

to Pascal, one of which is as follows: in raising "the very long question" of "what misery can exist in the pursuit of truth," Strauss remarks, "It is good from this point of view to look occasionally at Pascal, where the case against the theoretical ideal is presented with great strength."[2] Strauss faults Hobbes for allowing the "experience, as well as the legitimate anticipation, of unheard-of progress" to render him "insensitive" to what Pascal called "the eternal silence of those infinite spaces."[3]

The references to Pascal made in print by Strauss himself are rare but pregnant. Strauss states that "[t]he classics did not regard the conflict between philosophy and the city as tragic. Xenophon at any rate seems to have viewed that conflict in the light of Socrates' relation to Xanthippe. At least at this point, there appears then something like an agreement between Xenophon and Pascal. For the classics, the conflict between philosophy and the city is as little tragic as the death of Socrates."[4] In his "Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*," Strauss notes that "[w]hat Pascal said with antiphilosophic intent about the impotence of both dogmatism and skepticism, is the only possible justification of philosophy."[5] Which Pascal fragment Strauss has in mind may be a little unclear, one possibility being Brunschvicg fr. 434, but the reference to "impotence" suggests that Strauss means fr. 395 (see fig. A.1).[6]

Figure A.1. This extract reads: "Nous avons une impuissance de prouver invincible à tout le dogmatisme. Nous avons une idée de la vérité invincible à tout le pyrrhonisme." *Source*: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, public domain. [alt text=The image shows a handwritten page that reads in French: "Nous avons une impuissance de prouver invincible à tout le dogmatisme. Nous avons une idée de la vérité invincible à tout le pyrrhonisme."]



In *The City and Man*, Pascal is brought in to testify, going "much beyond Aristotle," that while "there are things which are by nature just . . . they can[not] be known to unassisted man owing to original sin."[7] Finally, in *Natural Right and History*, Strauss refers to Pascal (along with Maimonides) for the thought that "[w]hen 'nature' is denied, 'custom' is restored to its original place."[8]

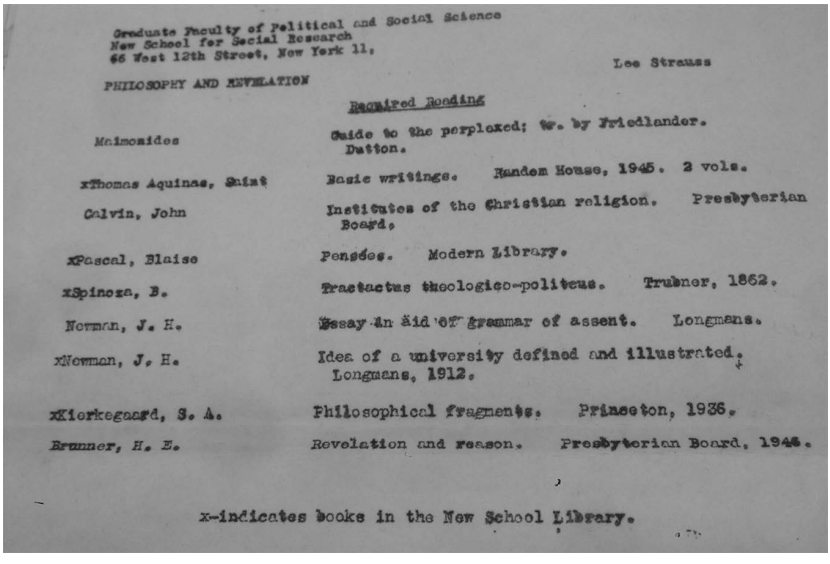
Philippe Bénéton's "Strauss and Pascal: Is Discussion Possible?" (in *Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers,* ed. Geoffrey M. Vaughan [Catholic University Press, 2018]) is a start, but it has not benefited from Strauss's extensive discussion of Pascal available in the archive. The most substantial, but still extremely brief, engagement of Strauss with Pascal that has been previously published is found in "Reason and Revelation," in *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*.[9]

Before we present the notes themselves, we might point out the crucial argument or challenge that Pascal poses on Strauss's reading: it is that the philosophical life is not permitted, is even sinful, and is not able to get a hold of unchangeable necessity. Strauss's twofold response is that Pascal's thought itself depends on and presupposes modern science, just as it depends on and presupposes biblical morality: the whole analysis of *divertissement* (1) presupposes an *intelligible* necessity (though in Pascal's case a necessity understood in the slanting light of modern mathematical physics)—viz., that a finite being that *knows* of its finiteness cannot possibly find its happiness in itself; (2) presupposes biblical morality—that pride is bad and sinful. Because Strauss sees this moral implication as playing a crucial role in Pascal's position, he wonders if Pascal's Pyrrhonism regarding knowledge of justice—his claim that we are ignorant of justice, a claim Pascal needs in order to defend the possibility that eternal damnation is compatible with divine justice—endangers Pascal's own argument.

Leo Strauss's Notes on Pascal (1947)

Editorial Note: This transcript is an edited version of a manuscript found in the Leo Strauss Papers.[10] Editorial notes are added in curly brackets. The underlinings are replaced with italics. The edition of Pascal Strauss used was *Pensées et opuscules* (5e édition revue), ed. M. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Hachette, 1909). The notes are related to Strauss's Fall 1947 course on "Reason and Revelation" at the New School for Social Research. The syllabus is shown in fig. A.2.

Figure A.2. Syllabus for Strauss's Fall 1947 course on "Reason and Revelation." *Source:* Leo Strauss Archive, University of Chicago. [alt text=A syllabus for a course taught by Leo Strauss at the New School for Social Research, which includes readings of Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed,* Thomas Aquinas's *Basic Writings,* Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* Pascal's *Pensées,* Newman's *Essay in Aid of Grammar of Assent,* Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments,* and Brunner's *Revelation and Reason*]



Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science
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Leo Strauss

PHILOSOPHY AND REVELATION

Required Reading

Maimonides	Guide to the perplexed; tr. by Friedlander. Dutton.
xThomas Aquinas, Saint	Basic writings. Random House, 1945. 2 vols.
Calvin, John	Institutes of the Christian religion. Presbyterian Board.
xPascal, Blaise	Pensées. Modern Library.
xSpinoza, B.	Tractactus theologico-politicus. Trubner, 1862.
Norman, J. H.	Essay in aid of grammar of assent. Longmans.
xNewman, J. H.	Idea of a university defined and illustrated. Longmans, 1912.
xKierkegaard, S. A.	Philosophical fragments. Princeton, 1936.
Brunner, H. E.	Revelation and reason. Presbyterian Board, 1946.

x-indicates books in the New School Library.

Pascal's critique of the philosophy {Seven arguments and counterarguments – ed.}

The apparent self-contradiction: that use of reason for fighting reason—actually this:

1′) reason can show the insufficiency of reason for solving the human problem, for understanding man, to say nothing of the universe, and to say still less of God.

2′) reason can refute the *objections* to faith

Reason confronts us with the alternative of despair and faith—faith is the gift of God.—[The *real* self-contradiction—see re عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom}]

However much P. may insist on the uncertainty of reason, he cannot but admit the *greater* uncertainty of faith—we do not "know" what is believed

in the same way in which we "know" that we exist e.g. Still, it is sufficient for him that there is no *absolute* certainty of knowledge: the two positions, belief and unbelief, are uncertain. Now, uncertainty is an objection to what claims to be knowledge; it is *no* objection to faith (fr. 194, p. 415).

[Nor, we shall say, is it a *proof*—may the insistence on the mysteriousness of revelation and on the hiddenness of God be due to the awareness of the problematic character of the *basic* assertion of faith, viz. divine gov't of man? Cf. Eth. {Spinoza's *Ethics*} I app.]

[There must be *some* kind of *positive* argument—cf. *demonstration*]—the *demonstrable* misery of man without God, and hence of the philosophers, and hence the demonstrative refutation of the claim of the philosophers that philosophy, and philosophy alone, leads to happiness.

1) Philosophy does not lead to happiness - fr.425 (p. 518) - {LS:} but: Socrates fr. 82: imagination rather than thought leads to happiness—{LS:} mistakes "contentment" for true happiness.
fr. 67: science does not help in afflictions—{LS:} in some it does.
fr. 129: no repose possible for man, or man cannot find his happiness in repose {LS:} but the *progress* in understanding

Still, philosophy presupposes that man *can* understand by his own efforts—but:

2) The radical insufficiency of human understanding
a) man's incapacity to grasp the infinite, i.e. the true principles of the whole—fr. 72 (p. 350–355) {LS:} - but does he not *know* the true principles of the whole are the infinite? [But does not the finite have principles of its own? Are there no πρῶτα πρὸς ἡμᾶς {*prota pros hemas*; things first for us}? [or they may have the proportionateness to *human* understanding which is required for understanding the universe.]
b) عَادَة {ʿāda—habit, custom}: necessity is a precarious *assumption* cf. fr. 194 (p. 418, p. 4-p. 419, p. 1], 208, 339 (see separate sheet)—{LS:} without it Pascal's argument would break down
c) man cannot understand *himself* in his contradictoriness, fr. 139 (page 392f.) etc. fr. 420

His self-contradiction: similar to God and to worms: fr. 432, 435 {LS:} but: ζῶον λόγον ἔχον {*zoon logon echon*; the animal that has logos: speech/reason}—fr. 358, 366, 418.

Cf. also the statement on "flies"—fr. 358—{LS:} ἡ ἀνθρώπιων φύσις πολλαχῇ δούλη {*he anthropine physis pollahē gar hē physisdoulē tōn anthrōpōn*; for the nature of human is enslaved in many ways; a version of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b20}

[Obvious insufficiency of philosophic happiness: the need for diversion and the distraction.] [Human inability to understand oneself in one's natural desires.(A human being is neither an angel nor a beast, and unhappiness would have it that he who wants to be like an angel will act like a beast) with "human nature is often enslaved" in Plato.]

d) the demonstrable insufficiency of philosophic psychology: (divertissement—proves original sin)

fr. 194 (page 420)

his inability to become happy *and* his desire for happiness proves original sin: fr. 425 (p. 518f.), 434 (532), 445, 477, 489 end—{LS:} obviously not—cf. e.g. Rousseau's criticism of the intellectual development of man: the happiness of the savages: does P. not take his bearings by the misery of *civilised* man?

e) dogmatism refuted by pyrrhonism and vice versa but so that pyrrhonism has the edge: the first principles are *true* but not *believed*—{LS:} but: a) distinction between λόγος {logos; reason} and νόησις {*noesis*; intellection}; he who seeks λόγος for everything, ἀναιρέι λόγον {*anairei logon*; removes reason}; b) doubt of existence of external world based on delusions of senses and dreams: not sufficient consider fr. 434 (p. 529 p. 2), fr. 386.

3) Assuming equal uncertainty of both philosophy & faith: the wager
The last doubt: eternal annihilation or eternal damnation—we do not *know* which expects us—we lose nothing by assuming eternal damnation and therefore reforming our lives, refraining from pursuit of pleasure, submitting to ecclesiastical authority—fr. 194 (417 p. 3, 419 p. 2), 233 (p. 437–441)

{LS:} but: a) wager *presupposes* that eternal damnation is a *possibility*—is it?—incompatible with divine justice—we do not know what justice is?—Insufficiency of Pascal's argument; b) we abando*n nothing*? is there *no* earthly happiness, both individual and collective? is death the greatest evil? cf. fr. 194 (417 u.)

(Above all: s'embêtir {to be bored}: p. 441) cf. Anatole France's *Thaïs*
Pascal's critique of the philosophers -- continued

4) The fundamental argument: mind → infinite
heart → lovable
{connected by a bracket to both arrow-statements above:} the conflict between mind & heart can be resolved only by a *lovable* infinite-eternal—cf. fr. 205f.
{LS:} *but:* is this *wish* not due to desire for *comfort*? does it not lead to *illusory* comfort, — hence to misery? must we not sacrifice *all* our heart's wishes to our mind's desire for clarity? and is clarity not the only *solid* happiness? In other words, if the *heart* loves only knowledge, the problem is resolved —cf. {Spinoza's} Tr{actatus Theologico-Politcus}. IV.12f.

No infinite or eternal good would be required, if man could love a finite good without suffering for its loss or the prospect of its loss—*fr. 181:* {LS:} But: there is a finite good which we cannot love without *not* wishing its eternity—this finite good is our progress in knowledge.

Implied: we cannot be happy without being loved—being loved is an essential ingredient of happiness—{LS:} Is not being admired more than being loved? No nearness in space & time required; no services required: we may admire the victories of an enemy although we cannot love him. Love has no relation to excellence, whereas admiration has. Love has no criteria of its relevance outside of itself, whereas admiration has. The κάλλιστος κόσμος {*kallistos kosmos*; the most beautiful universe} is an object of admiration rather than of love.

5) Philosophy does not attack self-love—fr. 455 beg.; it encourages *pride* —fr. 430 (p. 522), 461-463)
{LS}: *presupposes* Biblical morality

6) Philosophy asserts that God cannot take care of man—but we do not know what God is—fr. 430 (p. 525)—we cannot set limits to God's mercy
{connected by a bracket to the first statement under point 6:} {LS:} all right—but this means merely that both assertions are a matter of *faith* only. Still, P. admits that a real *proof* of the *fact* of revelation is required—fr. 430 (p. 525u {bottom}-526, p. 1).

Yet: the proof must not be absolutely *clear*—to expect more, would not be *just* fr. 430 (526 p. 2-3) {LS:} but we know nothing of justice?
the argument based on the Bible—the principle: fr. 66, 289-291.

7) *The* argument as stated in *Theol. and Pol.*[11] I B.

Ad Pascal
His extreme scepticism—endangering his whole argument—
his alternative: dogmatism—pyrrhonism—the truth is *beyond*—
also عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom}—but his knowledge of human nature → esprit de la finesse—its superiority in regard to depth & relevance to esprit géométrique—why not *return* to esprit de finesse as the *common basis* of dogmatism & pyrrhonism rather than *go beyond* them?

Connection with general problem of modern philosophy:
Biblical theology—Greek cosmology no truth scepticism
truth scepticism reinforced by Biblical theology
Descartes: cosmology on *the basis* of extreme scepticism → epistemology
philosophy of culture = human productivity—anthropology (existentialist philosophy).
The latest things are correction of extremes—why not *return* to the original position

Ad *metaphysical criticism*—consider Sp.{inoza}'s denial of possibility of any trans-rational "knowledge" in the light of Pascal's argument

[Spinoza and Pascal]
Critique of Sp.[inoza]'s critique – on the basis of Pascal's Pensées
Sp's argument leads up to: uncertainty of revelation – certainty = mathematical certainty = truth. (cf. Tr.{actatus Theologico-Politicus} XV with letter to Burgh). Man has no access to *the* truth but reason: cor {heart}= mens {mind} = intellectus {intellect} (Tr. XII *2*).

But no mathematical argument in Tr. – even the mathematical argument of *Ethics* is deceptive: exotericism

Pensées I directed in fact against these two essential features of Sp.'s critique (a) geometric method, b) exotericism or unnatural way of writing).

1) *the limitations of geometric spirit.* cf. Pascal's de l'esprit géométrique.

Geometry	*Finesse*
Few principles	*many* principles —but: fr. 2.
Clear & "grossieres" principles → they are seen	subtle & delicate principles → they are felt rather than seen.
The *irreducibility* of precepts: fr. 20	they *are not accessible or available*. fr.
---------- of truths: fr. 21.	1, 3, 4. fr. 72 (p. 351 p.{aragraph} 2).

Esprit de finesse: instinctive tact in moral matters – no science outside the sphere of the geometric spirit : science is mathematical science (cf. criticism of Aristotle in de l'esprit géométrique).
Morality more important than speculation and independent of speculation: fr. 67-68.
(The question: why science? in a seemingly Socratic sense).

2) l'esprit de finesse & l'art de persuader {the art of persuasion}
The language of the heart: natural presentation of the passions (fr. 11).
Natural discussion = speech of the gentleman – its sincerity – opposed to academic – pedantic – specialistic as well as to rhetorical-bombastic speech – the true language of the heart, of tactful and refined feelings: fr. 14, 16, 25, *29*, 30, 34-38.

Connection with Montaigne – but Pascal criticizes Montaigne (fr. 62-65) [implicitly a criticism of exotericism.] But cf. fr. 336.

One has to consider l'amour propre {vanity/pride} of the addressee : fr. 9-10, 16. p. 270. Cf. p. 195. fr. 189
Superiority of gentlemanship = morality to book learning: fr. 67-68.
The danger of l'esprit de la finesse → divertissement (fr. 11) (l'esprit de la finesse is only the point of contact of theological argument)

Pensées II {fr. 60-183}
Rational argument in favor of revelation: Misère de l'homme sans Dieu {misery of man without God}(fr. 60) *cf. fr. 242-243*. Cf. fr. 185.

Not based on physics: fr. 67-68. Cf. p. 361u {fr. 77, end}: nature is "mute," does not lead to God {LS note:}[no *proof of the existence of God*: fr. 233 (p.

436); [the wager fr.]. The argument addressed to *moral* men: fr. 187 cf. fr. 67-68 on *primacy* of morality.

The *radical insufficiency of human understanding* -- fr. 72 {Disproportion de l'homme} (cf. fr. 73 beginning) :{Mais peut-être que ce sujet passe la portée de la raison . . . .}

[The boast of unbelieving man is science—but science does no help in *serious* situations, in afflictions (fr. 67) {Vanité des sciences. La science des choses extérieures ne me consolera pas de l'ignorance de la morale au temps d'affliction, mais la science des mœurs me consolera toujours de l'ignorance des sciences extérieures: The vanity of sciences. The knowledge of external things will not console me for the ignorance of ethics in times of distress, but the knowledge of morals will always console me for the ignorance of external sciences.}—more than that: it is precisely science that teaches man that man is radically & always in an extremely serious situation: science reveals to man his misery, without giving him *any* remedy whatever.] The *double* infinity—the two abysses: man has no support in the universe for his self-consciousness. If there were only the infinitely great, le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis will frighten him (fr. 206), but man could withdraw to his own finite substantiality, to his *indivisible* substantiality: but the infinitely small—the finite surrounded by *two* infinities (cf. p. 354) {fr. 72} More precisely perhaps: all grant that the infinitely great is incomprehensible—but we mentally control it through its *principles*, the "small elements"—but these elements again lead into the infinite (p. 352, p. 3) {fr. 72}

Both infinites transcend absolutely, not only man's understanding, but his imagination as well.

The *disproportion* between human understanding and reality (cf. 350u-351o) {still fr. 72}

(cf. Hobbes[12] → construction of models. *But cf. fr. 121.*). {Idealistic interpretation of the "infinite" (Urteil des Ursprungs {judgment of the origin; Herman Cohen – ed. as an apparent way out.}

But does not the finite have principles of its own? Are there no πρῶτα πρὸς ἡμᾶς {*prōta pros hēmas*; first for us}? [or they may have the proportionateness to *human* understanding which is required for understanding the universe.]

They are rejected as derivative & inexact (351 p. 2) {fr. 72 again}

[Criticism of Plato-Aristotle on the basis of a) scepticism, b) modern mathematical physics is the basis of Pascal's argument. Science is *mathematical* science—but mathematical science is a) hypothetical and b) limited to corporeal world—ergo: science does not make intelligible reality.

As *far* as science teaches us anything, it teaches us the misery of man.
Pascal, Pensées II contin.
[Still: man is the only being in the universe that *thinks*—in his *thinking* man finds his *happiness*—it is his *thinking* that *establishes* the two infinites.]
(fr. 339. 346 347, 348—but: 365ff.]

Not reason, but foolish imagination leads to happiness: fr. 82 (363-364 p. 1)

The *weakness* of reason : fr. 82 (p. 364 p.4}. {Le plus grand philosophe du monde, sur une planche plus large qu'il ne faut, s'il y a au-dessous un précipice, quoique sa raison le convainque de sa sûreté, son imagination prévaudra. Plusieurs n'en sauraient soutenir la pensée sans pâlir et suer: "The greatest philosopher in the world on a plank wider than necessary, if there is a precipice below, although his reason convinces him of his safety, his imagination will prevail. Many could not bear the thought without turning pale and sweating."} → the precariousness of man's thinking and hence of his happiness. {The role of τύχη {*tuchē* ; chance} : fr. 97 {La chose la plus importante à toute la vie est le choix du métier, le hasard en dispose . . . . : "The most important thing in life is the choice of profession ; chance determines it"}

[The *precariousness* of man's happiness would not do away with the fact that only thinking constitutes man's happiness—it is not necessary to assert that man's thinking can *guarantee* the *conditions* of its actualization: εὐημερία {*euēmeria* cf. EN Nicomachean Ethics 1099b8, 1178b33: "sunshine"/equipment/success; see "Reason and Revelation," p. 148: "*euemeria*, sunshine in the shape of food, shelter, health, freedom and friendship – a sunshine that is not produced by philosophy, is required for philosophizing and hence happiness, although it does not constitute happiness.].] Cf. fr. 181: the highest pleasure leads to "amor fati".

The *radical* doubt : *the doubt of φύσις* {*physis* ; nature, عادة ʿāda—habit, custom} fr. 93 (cf. fr. 90-95).

Geometric necessity would not dispose of this ("logical" and "real" possibility)

But : fr. 81, 97, 99 beg.—yet : *due to free creation*. Fr. 208, *222*, *233*[13] (p. 3750 {top; page 435 top}: Notre âme est jetée dans le corps où elle trouve nombre, temps, dimensions, elle raisonne là-dessus et appelle cela nature, nécessité, et ne peut croire autre chose: «Our soul is cast into the body, where it finds number, time, dimensions; it reasons upon these things and calls this nature, necessity, and cannot believe anything else."}, *339*.

[Still: does not the whole analysis of *divertissement* presuppose an *intelligible* necessity—*viz.,* that a finite being which *knows* of its finiteness cannot possibly find its happiness in itself?]

Impossibility of human happiness—of a state of repose (cf. Bacon, Hobbes) (cf. fr. 129: Notre nature est dans le mouvement, le repos entier est la mort.)

"*Divertissement*": fr. 135, 139 (pp. 392, 393, 396).

Pascal's starting-point is: the basic reason of man's restlessness is that man does not want to think of *himself*—of his imperfection, nothingness, mortality—the right life is *meditatio mortis*—his implicit objection to Sp.{inoza} is that his psychology does not fathom the depths of man *because* Sp. denies the *meditatio mortis* {"A free man" (by which he means "one who lives according to the dictate of reason alone") "thinks of nothing less than death, and his wisdom is a meditation on life, not on death." Ethics, IV, prop. 67}—fr. 139 (392, p. 3; 393 p. 2-3)

[The question is whether Pascal's analysis of divertissement is really adequate. No sufficient clarification of man's *natural* needs as impulses to activity and his natural need *for* activity as actualisation of his possibility—his natural need for *relaxation*. Pascal traces both Caesar's love of glory (→ conquest of the world) and the courtier's gambling or hunting to the *same* root: are the *qualitative* differences not decisive precisely from the point of view of morality?]

Many phenomena which Pascal describes as divertissement, can be understood *better* in a different way. Still, there is such a thing as distraction —*especially* in *our* world: radio, love of noise, etc.—I believe there is no ancient term for boredom (Langeweile): taedet me alicuis rei {"I am bored of something"}the unnatural character of *modern* life—how? the *necessity* of work, the *praiseworthy* character of certain *kinds* of ἔργα {*erga;* works}—unpleasantness of πόνος {*ponos*; toil}, the ἡδονη [*the pleasure*] of laziness (lazzarone). Cf. 396n. fr. 142 (p. 398), fr. 151, fr. 152. Connection between *distraction* and *vanity*: we are running away from ourselves, fearing the contemplation on what we are— we want to *preserve* our high opinion of ourselves: confirmation by others → vanity—fr. 147. (The analysis *presupposes* the religious "ideal.") (Why did the *philosophers* disregard the phenomenon put into the center by Pascal? Were they blind or superficial? They knew of course that, if εὐδαιμονία *{eudaimonia*; happiness} = θεωρία {theoria; contemplation}, the large majority of men are unhappy, because they seek happiness in the wrong things, in perishable things—how the average man reacts when he becomes aware of the futility of his aims, is much less important for the philosopher to know than a) what their aims are, and b) why they are futile. Above all: according to *the* philosophers, the typical reaction to the futility of the imaginative and affective aims is: *superstition. The analysis of superstition is the counterpart, in Sp. teaching, to Pascal's analysis of divertissement. More generally expressed: the analysis of false religion. Divertissement becomes a central subject if (large groups of) of non-philosophers become consciously irreligious.* {LS note:} And such non-philosophers are *the* addressees of the *Pensées.*)

Connection between distraction and *fear of death*: fr. 183, e.g. [We necessarily fear death as summum malum—but is this fear *reasonable*? Do we not *admire* certain dead people more than many living people?]

Connection between death and vanity: fr. 211.
{in pencil:} *Sp*'s position – a modification of *the* philos. position: philosophy being the attempt to replace opinion by knowledge is the highest human possibility: it is the *only* way in which man can be truly happy. For: man is incomplete – he must attach himself to something else to become complete: he must love. If the beloved object is perishable, *love* leads to madness → attachment to the *eternal* – to the *truly* eternal, to the *known* eternal. Difficulty of *knowing* it: the *liberating* effect of the *quest* – the increasing clarity about the *complexity* of reality as the greatest

enjoyment and achievement of which man is capable. *Disputation*, about decisive character, of true philosophy: understanding of the problems rather than the answer. {added in pen:} Cf. Pascal fr. 181: the good is the coherent account – its breakdown is a source of pleasure to the philosopher {LS' note:} "Cf. Brunschvicg, p. 297."
Dissatisfaction with this – with σκέψις {skepsis/examination} → science on the *basis* of extreme doubt: *mathematical* certainty as actually achievable – limitation of investigation to mathematical aspect of reality: the clear & distinct account of the whole is *possible* – it makes irrelevant the confused accounts whose claims to divine origin are, in addition, absolutely uncertain.

{in pen:}
Pascal: 1) the clear & distinct account of the whole is not *the* true account, because it is not an account of the *whole*: a whole *dimension* is inaccessible to mathematical method (esprit de finesse + esprit géométrique): the *dimension* of morality (fr. 67, 68). Mathematics > external world (object of physics) ≠ the *heart* (which Sp. identifies with the intellect). fr. 277, 278, 282.

2) The Socratic question: why science?—the *possibility* of this question shows that man is *primarily* concerned, not with science, but with happiness. How can man become happy? Without God, man is radically miserable: the experience, the honest admission, and the understanding of this misery leads him to *seek* God, to *desire* that there is a God, or that the religious message is true.

But, the philosophers object, man can find his happiness in *understanding*, in science.

Yes—α) science does not help in *afflictions* (fr. 67).—not reason, but imagination or folly leads to happiness.

β) precisely science reveals the misery of man: the two abysses of the two infinites; science destroys the securities of pre-scientific man.

γ) science does not lead to understanding at all: our ignorance of the true principles (disproportion of human understanding and reality).

The problem of *physis* {nature}—عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom}) (cf. fr. 222). → the fundamental problem: is τύχη {tuchē; chance} at the bottom of ἀνάγκη {ankē; necessity}, or vice versa?

γ′) science is unable to account for the facts of human life (distraction)

The argument of Pensées II can be stated as follows: the philosophers admit that the life of non-philosophers is fundamentally miserable; the only problem therefore is the happiness of the philosopher. But philosophy cannot lead to, or constitute, happiness, because of the radical uncertainty of the principles of being: while the principles of being are uncertain, the misery of man is certain.

Pensées III {fr. 184-241}—

Reason or science is insufficient to give an adequate account of the whole: it cannot show that the whole is intelligible without God and thus refute the theistic assertion. While reason is uncertain, it is certain that man is miserable without God: man will *seek* God, he will *desire* that God exists, or that the religious message is true—provided that he is *sensible.*

Yet: the apparent *uncertainty* of religion: this is so far from being an *objection* to religion that it is the *contention* of religion (Deus absconditus): religio*n must* be uncertain so that *full* devotion or faith is required for certainty. fr. 194 (p. 415), fr. 229, fr. 233 (p. 437 p. 2).

In other words:
I) Revelation cannot be *refuted*: impossibility of "system." Religion is the*n possibly* true: the unbeliever cannot have certainty, but only *doubt*.
II) Revelation cannot be rejected as *uncertain—suspense of judgment is impossible*: the atheist position would require *absolute* clarity or certainty (fr. 221).
for—a) it is reasonable that the most important knowledge should not b*e certain* knowledge (God wants *faith*)
b) it can be shown that the most important question is not capable of a *certain* answer.

The most important question: in the case of the unbeliever, the misery and shortness of this life is followed by either eternal damnation or eternal annihilation—neither is *certain*, but one is *necessary.*

The unbeliever confronted with this situation can either *face* this situation or try to *evade* it.

Let us assume that he *evades* it → *divertissement*: this is so fantastic, so *unreasonable* that it amounts to a proof of original sin (fr. 200, 211). fr. 194 (p. 420).

{The next sentence is emphasized with two vertical lines in the left-hand margin.} [Not the fact of foolish diversions, hatred of solitude etc., proves insufficiency of philosophic psychology, but the fact that man seeks distraction *although he is faced by this absolute uncertainty regarding the most important subject.* {LS' note:} as to importance of this argument, cf. fr. 560 end.)

But is man faced by this uncertainty "par nature" {by nature} and not rather on the *basis* of revelation? And is it not natural or reasonable therefore that natural man *assumes* eternal annihilation, clings to life and seeks the only happiness possible, in the fragile happiness of *this* life?]

The atheist has then to *face* the dilemma: he has to admit the *possibility* of eternal damnation (and eternal bliss). One cannot *suspend* one's judgment between eternal life and eternal annihilation: "il faut parier; cela n'est pas volontaire, vous êtes embarqué"—p. 437u. {paragraph 11 of fr. 233[14]}—you are *headed* either for one or for the other—suspending judgment means *betting* {on} "annihilation." *There is no neutral position.*[15]

Philosophy asserts that one has to suspend his judgment in all cases of uncertainty—but one can*not* suspend his judgment on all matters of life & death—fr. 194 (p. 416) and fr. 234—hence philosophy *presupposes* that all matters of life and death are settled in *advance* or that "suspense of judgment" is *the* good life in philosophy: based on the *insight* that the philos. Life is the good life. But this cannot be an *insight* if revelation is *possible*, as it is *admitted* to be: philosophy rests on an arbitrary decision: on a wager.

The question is: whether the wager is *reasonable.* Reasonable choice is guided by 2 considerations: the true and the good. Consideration of truth is out, because we do not *know.* Hence the reasonable choice is limited to the desirable.

We have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We risk nothing (the negligible or non-existent happiness of this life) for an infinitely great good: if we lose, we lose nothing (we will be annihilated); if we gain, we gain everything (eternal bliss).

But if we bet on the atheistic proposition, we risk nothing for an infinitely great evil: if we lose, we "gain" eternal damnation (lose everything), and if we gain, we gain nothing (annihilation). Fr. 233 (pp. 437-440).

[Presupposed: that it is *reasonable* to assume possibility of eternal damnation (and immortality of the soul); doubts lead to *investigation*, the θεοφιλέστατον {*theophilestaton*; most beloved by god}: God is not a gentleman who resents it if his word is not trusted or if he is not believed on his word (*Cyropaedia* {VII.2.15–17}). Cf. p. 425 p. 2 {fr. 195, paragraph 6}, 436u. {bottom} {fr. 233, paragraphs 8–9}, fr. 202, *390* (& parallels).

That it is reasonable to order one's whole life with a view to an uncertain, and even improbable, possibility—s'abêtir {make oneself a beast/stupid]—for nothing? Cf. P. 441 {final three paragraphs of fr. 233} (cf. Anatole France *Thaïs*). Is the consideration of earthly felicity—the only felicity of which we know anything—both individual and social altogether irrelevant?]

[As to *impossibility of neutrality*—cf. Marxism: the non-Marxists are capitalist-fascists.)

Admiration → ambition, glory → admiration of *oneself*: self-satisfaction is ἥδιστον {*hediston*; most pleasant} (Spinoza, cf. Tr.pol. VII 6; cf. *κάλλιστος κόσμος* {*kallistos kosmos*; most beautiful cosmos} —Timaeus etc.: object of *admiration* rather than love. Also *Banquet:* ambition higher than love of persons)

Pascal on the problem of love (fr. 323): one never loves persons, but qualities (one loves persons, not on account of themselves, but on account of qualities—e.g. my *child*) (the same would apply to admiration]

The only *thing* which one loves, is oneself (fr. 483, 485)—(but, if this is so, are the qualities for which one *admires* men not fundamentally different from those for which one *loves* men?)

Follows *here* : Pensées VI on "orgueil" {pride; see below}

Pensées IV {fr. 242-290}
Survey of the argument

1) The atheists pretend that they have given a demonstrative refutation of the Christian faith: they are utterly mistaken a) the limitations of l'esprit géométrique—the hypothetical character of the definitions—the clear & distinct account following from these definitions is not the true

account, because it necessarily leaves out decisive parts of reality (e.g. no analysis of divertissement; the whole realm of l'esprit de finesse: the heart). b) عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom}

→ the atheistic position is itself uncertain.

2) The Christian position too is uncertain (Deus absconditus)—but Christianity admits this and even explains it.

The Christian religion not based on natural theology (cf. عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom})—fr. 242 (446 p. 2), 243 f.

both positions are unequally uncertain → *wager.*

3) Yet there are proofs by reason of the Christian religion—fr. 185, 242 (446 p. 1), 245, 252 (450u.), 253f., 259f., 282 (460 p. 3), 287

4) What are these proofs? Reason realizes its own insufficiency: fr. 267-270, *272,* 273-275.

The superiority of sentiment & the heart: fr. 252 (p. 450), *277, 278, 282*

[Still, this could be taken care by restoration of νόησις {*noēsis*; intellection} ≠ διάνοια {*dianoia*; discursive reason}]

fr. 60. Decisive: man cannot solve his problem by his own means: man is miserable without God (i.e. Christ). More precisely: man's misery cannot be understood but on the basis of faith. fr.230, Brunschvicg's note.

The crucial example: *divertissement* —not the fact of foolish diversions, hatred of solitude etc. proves insufficiency of philosophic psychology, but the fact that man seeks distraction *although he is faced by absolute uncertainty regarding the most important subject* (his eternal fate) fr. 200, 211, 194 (p. 420), 202

Man's radical problem: man needs an eternal, an infinite which he can love absolutely {LS note:}: cf. Brunschvicg, 197]—His *mind* leads him to the infinite (and thus destroys all security derived from finite things), but this infinite is not lovable (fr. 206). His *heart* leads him to lovable things, but finite ones.

[Consider this problem for {LS discussion of} "Biblical and philosophic morality" {Spinoza's} Tr.{actatus Theologico-Politicus} IV.12 f.]

Pensées IV *continued*

Is this not a real refutation of the philosophic position? Philosophy asserts that man can become happy through philosophizing and *only* through philosophizing. But how can this be if there is no a priori certainty that the object of contemplation is absolutely lovable? For happiness requires that man loves something eternal. But if the eternal which philosophy

discovers is repulsive rather than lovable (fr. 206)? Is {there} therefore not a hopeless conflict between the mind and the heart?

Why must man have an *eternal* good (= eternal lovable)? Because every temporal or finite good will be *lost. If man could love a finite good without suffering from its loss, no infinite or eternal good would be required.* fr. 181. That this is so, is asserted by Plato (*Philebus* 51ff.) with regard to the ἡδέα {*hēdea*; pleasant things}. There is a finite good which we cannot love without *not* wishing its eternity: this is *our* progress in knowledge.

Let us assume that the finite good is the improvement of the mind, or as continuous understanding as possible, an understanding aiming at coherent and clear account: the philosopher enjoys the coherent account at which he arrived. But the account will be *refuted*. He enjoys that too: he *learns* something through this.

But the graver danger: the philosopher knows that, however high he may rise, he will fall again (death, senility, forgetting due to illness). *The more he enjoys his understanding, the more he will be troubled by his error and ignorance.* But: he will not expect, and therefore not wish, more than that degree of understanding of which he is really capable. *His insight into the necessity of the finite character of his knowledge will prevent him from suffering from these shortcomings*. Man's misery is due to his desires? for unattainable ends, for the *impossible*. This desire is due to *ignorance* (Tr. theol.pol., praef. beg.).

Ergo: *insight into necessity essential for happiness* → عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom}) (cf. fr. 222).

But: *when* he forgets, when he sickens, one will no longer *see* the necessity and be unhappy. Yet, philosophy does not *claim* that it can guarantee the εὐημερία{*euēmeria*; "sunshine"/equipment/success}—

Pascal assumes that the eternal or infinite must be lovable if man is to be happy—i.e. that love of another *being* (i.e. love simply) is an essential ingredient of happiness. But what is love? For what *reasons* do we love someone or something? Is not admiration more than love? No nearness in space & time required, no services required. We may admire the virtues of an enemy although we cannot love him. *Love has no relation to excellence,*

whereas admiration has. Love has no criteria of its relevance outside of itself, whereas admiration has.

Pensées V {fr. 291-338}
cf. fr. 434 (p. 532), fr. 445, fr. 477, 489 end, 502

Wager > eternal damnation. Cf. p. 425 p. 2, 436u {bottom}.

The objection which P. has to meet: a just God would not condemn man to eternal pain, just as a just man would not take savage revenge. P.'s answer: man does not know what justice is. (fr. 390).

The proof: the purely conventional character of justice (fr. 291ff.)

a) δίκαιον {*dikaion*; just} = νόμιμον {*nomimon*; legal}[but this *follows* from δίκαιον = not to hurt others or to serve others → peace, not violence, legality rather than antinomianism; cf. fr. 299 end, 313, 319, 320, 332f.]

b) rule of *custom* based on rule of *force* (of the many) – fr. 301-303, 298f. [From the fact that only a very imperfect justice is *practicable* among men, it does not follow that we do not have the true *principles* of justice or their knowledge]

[Connection with عَادَة {ʿāda—habit, custom}-problem]

(The real objection would be this: the σόφος {*sophos*; wise one} does know what justice is—but his refusal to make everything dependent on justice or to identify justice with *the* ἀρετή {*aretē*; virtue} of man, leads to *indifference* to justice—his critique of eternal damnation is due to *indulgence*, ultimately *self*-indulgence: to his feeling that if demands of justice were taken seriously, he would deserve eternal damnation.

The philosophic answer: it can be shown that perfect justice—purity of heart—is impossible (the very prayers [ליבנו טהר {taher libenu "purify our hearts"}] prove it) and therefore cannot justly be demanded.—But: the maximum effort?)

[Sp. does not deny Pascal's thesis—ius naturale {natural right} = potentia naturalis {natural power} etc.—Sp.'s argument against eternal damnation is implied in denial of freewill of both God & man].

[The mixture of obscurity & clarity makes impossible stringent proof—but

it also makes impossible stringent proof of untruth of the assertions of faith. Presupposed is *some* clarity. The clarity of the inner experience (call) does not suffice—for it does not account for *the* historical revelation—there must be at least *some* link between the inner experience and the fact of the past (Kierkegaard: the mere notice that the apostles believed that God has become man and resurrection—does not suffice. {The confrontation with Kierkegaard will be published in a subsequent volume}). Cf. fr. 758.—Furthermore, the mere fact that there is no stringent proof on either side, decides in favor of the faith; for faith asserts that, and explains why, this is so and *must* be so (*need* for faith, for full devotion) (fr. 795; {LS note:} cf. fr. 194 [p. 415], 226). [Is there no explanation of the fact of uncertain clarity on the basis of unbelief? The uncertainty due to the imaginary character; the clarity due to the direction of feeling of the human heart which yearns for a comforting principle of the universe]

[Apply this to preliminary argument: of course we do not know whether there is revelation, and hence whether philosophy may not be ultimately insignificant or even meaningless—but, we cannot possibly assent to a mere suggestion of even millions and millions of people contested by millions of other people—we have to *investigate*—a) the oldest book and the authenticity of the Bible.—? b) the fulfillment of the prophecies—yet they are as obscure as miracles—cf. fr. 758—; c) the impossibility to understand man without recourse to original sin; d) the need of the heart: the first cause that loves and is lovable—the desire for comfort—*this* is the reason why theological and historical demonstrations did play a decisive role. But do they not take away the possibility of faith?]

[As for *the* argument in favor of revelation (—philosophy, the quest for evident knowledge, rests itself on an unevident basis if there is a possibility of revelation) —this is true only if stated in general terms, and not if stated ἀκριβῶς {*akribōs*; precisely} [the question is: is revelation *really* possible?]—for: for all we know, knowledge is best; certainly, superhuman knowledge would be better; but the difficulty is that superhuman knowledge as such cannot be or become human knowledge; it will always remain dubitable; and this applies, not merely to the content of revelation, but to the fact of revelation as well. A wise God will therefore not make acceptance of revelation the condition of salvation.

The clarity of that knowledge will take away the necessity or the merit of faith? Not at all—as little as the clarity of my knowledge that this is my neighbor, takes away the decisive difficulty of *loving* him.

The *particular* revelation becomes intelligible if there is liberum arbitrium {free will} as *the* cause of divine response: Abraham is the first and sole man who responded to the call – he is *therefore* elected – but does not his election precede his response? Does not the whole story start with לך לך {"Go forth," in *Genesis* 12:1}? Besides, should there never have been a man in China e.g. who did the same thing?

Either the reason of particular revelation is due to unpredictable choice of human beings (but this is {inkblot – ed.}) or it is due to the mystery of God's choice (and this makes God's action absolutely arbitrary and hence unjust). {LS note:} the question is: is revelation *really* possible?

Pensées VIII-IX {fr. 556-641}
Historical objections to revelation
(*previously*: a) the weakness of reason → impossibility of *refuting* revelation

b) man's ignorance of justice → impossibility to assert that eternal damnation is incompatible with divine justice.

c) inability of mortality to account for misery of man (divertissement)

d) man's quest for a lovable eternal – [but is this not due to unreasonable desire for *comfort*?])

The contradiction between the assertions of faith and the statements of the Bible: e.g. the Christian interpretation of the O.T. prophecies and the actual meaning of the passages in question.
Pascal's answer: a) distinction between spiritual and carnal understanding fr. 571 (fr.588).

b) בערפל לשכון אמר ה׳ {I *Kings* 8:12 and II *Chronicles* 6:1, "the Lord has chosen to abide in a thick cloud" (NJPS), "the Lord hath said he would abide (or dwell) in a thick darkness" (JPS 1917) – ed.}: fr. 568, 578, 581, 585

the obscurity an argument in *favor* of revelation. Cf. Sp.{inoza}'s principle of starting from the *clear* passages [LS' note: e.g. it is clear that temporal felicity is promised – is it really? is its clarity not *endangered* by command to love God with all one's heart, all one's soul and all one's power!]

The *fundamental* consideration: the uncertainty, or lack of evidence, of the assertions of faith is admitted: the *same* uncertainty is ascribed to unbelief – cf. fr. 564f.

Knowledge is *certain, but* limitation to what man knows and disregards (suspense of judgment) regarding the object of faith is *uncertain*. Hence Pascal does not seem to be compelled to assert the uncertainty of knowledge (pyrrhonism) – it would suffice for him to assert the *limited* character of knowledge. This would seem to make the *crucial* argument clearer. *But:* the *contrast* between the dimension of certain and evident knowledge and the dimension of *mere* belief. And: the danger that *progress* of knowledge e.g. might lead to a conquest of many strongholds of belief. Or: human knowledge, while being essentially limited, might be strong enough to realize the contrast between divine justice and eternal damnation → Pyrrhonism – but does this not endanger Pascal's *own* argument? He contradicts the Catholic teaching by denying natural theology and knowledge of natural law: does he not implicitly admit the strength of the unbelieving position by insisting on the untenability of natural theology and knowledge of the natural law? does he not despair of maintaining faith if there is any kind of important *knowledge*?
Does he not really *wish* to *prove* the divinity of Christianity? Cf. fr. 594-598 (poor apologetics > Grotius), above all 614, 619, 620, 622, 624-626, 628, 634. Cf. fr. 711, fr. 817 end.

Pensées X {fr. 642-692}—cf. p. 308 p. 2

fr. 642 (p. 621)—the idea of the whole (cf. e.g. fr. 652)—the doubtful character of the argument {connected by a symbol to "The *obscurity* of Bible . . . "}

fr. *645* {fr.} —*675* P's answer to the merely temporal character of O.{ld} T.{estament} (→ empirical disproof of the fact of providence: suffering of just and happiness of wicked—based on belief that sensible goods are *the* goods—this belief apparently borne out of O.T.—but: Pascal's argument).

fr. 645—the difficulties of the Gospel-text.

. . . . ad عادة {ʿāda—habit, custom}]
{Pascal XI – XIII}

The *obscurity* of the Bible—the *silly* things—cf. fr. 675, 680, 684, 691. *But: 758.*

[the argument is *not* conclusive: the *carnal* promises connected with the thirst for the establishment of the kingdom of God on *earth.* הַהוּא בַּיּוֹם, אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ--אֶחָד יְהוָה יִהְיֶה{"in that day shall the Lord be One, and His name one"—*Zechariah* 14:9}]

[also: *both* circumcision of the flesh and of the heart]—cf. fr. 698 end.

cf. fr. 671, 646, 860—how is this connected with basic problem?

The Christians' exclusive concern with spiritual glory—and yet: they rule—they defend themselves against the Turk etc. etc. Is the Jewish teaching not much more *sincere*? But??. for the *sake* of spiritual welfare one must *work*, and *pray*, for sensible goods? "the daily bread".

fr. 547 The proof {LS note:}[fr. 706, 710. Cf. 711: the assumption of authenticity]: *the* proof are the prophets of the OT whose *authenticity* is guaranteed by the Jews who are absolutely unsuspect because they are enemies of Christianity. {inserted above the line by LS} fr. 737,745,749,750 {LS note:} [*the* objection: the Jews do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah—answer: their unbelief is the much stronger argument in favor of Jesus than would be their belief.] But if one questions the authenticity of the OT?—cf. the doubtful apologetics of Pensées IX—; → the prophets or rather the Jews were deceived deceivers who expected the coming of a Messiah who actually came!—But did he actually come? Could not the prophetic or Jewish delusion incite a man and his disciples to believe that he is the Messiah . . .)

Miracles

Importance: fr. 808, 851, 806, 811-813, 829, 838, 839.

Proof of miracles:

there would not be false miracles if there were not true miracles—fr. 817, 818—consider fr. 817 end, fr. 818 end . . . .

(. . . . . .. prophets . . . .prophets)

(. . . . . .. witches, ...witches—*but are there witches*?)

(. . . . . .. oracles, ...oracles—but what are the true oracles?)

Philosophy – ἐδιζησάμην ἐμεωυτόν {*edizēsamēn emeōton*, "I sought for myself"/"I consulted myself" – Heraclitus B101 DK; or: ἐζητήσαμεν ἑμαυτούς [*exētēsamen emautous*/"we sought ourselves"] – perhaps Meno 86d}

What is a miracle? a strange event, a super-human fact, an event beyond human expectations—are not the *true* miracles the facts of nature?

there would not be false X but for the fact that there are true X

. . . . ψευδή {*pseudē*; false} . . . . . ψευδή)

Pascal's more precise argument: fr. 817 end, 818 end: the false miracles *imitations* of the true ones—his poor proof—

How to make the argument good: *assuming* the fact of true miracles, false miracles are necessary (Deus absconditus—God *tempts* man.)

Miracles are not recognized but by faith: fr. 194 (p. 415), fr. 823-826
but—fr. 852 cf. page 285 {from "Testament de Pascal," paragraphs 11–14}

The Biblical Jews had no doubt in the historicity of the lasting accounts of their past nor in the existence of God—but they did not have faith in the promises. cf. also the antagonism between Pascal and the Jesuits on *the basis* of Christian belief.

e) The impossibility of explaining the faith—but will anything said by the philosopher about love ever satisfy the lovers? e.g. the mature man realizing the doubtful character of the eternity of "first love"—

Kalām-argument: there will not be false miracles but for the true miracles—the former deceitful imitations permitted by God of the latter—fr. 817 f. (there would not be false X but for the fact that there are true X) ..... ψευδή {*pseudē*; false} ..... ψευδή)

Apply Ad Pascal—the φύσις [*physis;* nature]- عادة {*ʿāda—habit, custom*}*-problem*

φύσις is a problematic *interpretation* of regularity—that regularity *may* be nothing but عادة {*ʿāda—habit, custom*}. → radical scepticism. *Or:* idealistic legitimation of φύσις as a condition of the human mind (Hobbes, Kant). (Cf. Heidegger: coevity of truth and man, denies eternal truths as well as Demonstration überhaupt {demonstration generally}; he admits that beings [Seiendes] are *not* coeval with Dasein; as to the manner of being of beings in so far they antedate Dasein, it cannot be "eternity"—for only through Dasein is there the principle ex nihilo nihil fit: the *possibility* that prior to Dasein there was *nothing*: Dasein jumped into being out of nowhere, out of nothing; but on the basis of its understanding of the world "in" which Dasein is, Dasein has to *postulate* that ex nihilo nihil fit and that Seiendes precede Dasein.)

Can there be on that basis existentialist analytics? or, for that matter, Pascal's analysis of human nature? Man is able to realize that what constitutes his essence is that he is a finite & mortal corporeal being that possesses reason or understanding—such a being *necessarily* will seek

happiness (not merely the pleasant here & now) and can find happiness only in connection with the eternal—or else Heidegger's metaphysics—

These statements are true of man as man, and hence of *all* men: they are necessary and universally valid {LS note:}[fr. 222: "Pourquoi une vierge ne peut-elle enfanter?" pourquoi l'homme ne peut être heureux sans Dieu? Analysis of human nature—analysis of the process of generation. Ad hominem: God created everything *wisely*.]

But they do not do away with a radical *contingency*—the *contingent* fact that there are men. Why *must* there be men? Or dogs?

a) simple teleology: how does it contribute to beauty of the whole that there are men, dogs . . .

b) Aristotle: demonstration of the necessity of the eternity of the *visible* world *en bloc*.—

If both are inaccessible, we have to admit the radical contingency of the world → ex nihilo omnia fiunt ~ a nihilo omnia fiunt. {from nothing all things come into being ~ by nothing all things come into being}

{LS note:} fr. 654: the necessity *in* God—[but: we do not *know that* God is—*as* knowledge it is hypothetical knowledge, like geometry].

fr. 803, 816: the supranatural character of miracles presupposes *knowledge* of *nature*

cf. fr. 194 (p. 418 p. 4—419 p. 1). fr. 208, 339

Notes

1. Leo Strauss, *1959 Course on Cicero Offered at the University of Chicago*, ed. James H. Nichols (Chicago: Leo Strauss Center, 2016), 216. https://wslamp70.s3.amazonaws.com/leostrauss/s3fs-public/pdf/Cicero_1959_1.pdf. See, however, the letter to Karl Löwith from July 19, 1951: "Übrigens würde ich an Ihrer Stelle Kierkegaard Pascal vorziehen. K. scheint mir sowohl philosophisch wie theologisch der grössere Denker zu sein. Es ist kein Zufall, dass Pascal ein 'scientist' und nie ein Philosoph war" ["By the way, I would prefer Kierkegaard over Pascal if I were you. K. seems to me to be the greater thinker both philosophically and theologically. It is no coincidence that Pascal was a 'scientist' and never a philosopher"] (*Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Heinrich Meier, 3:676).

2. Strauss, *1959 Course on Cicero,* 102. For the other reference, see Strauss, 1959 Course on Cicero, 184. See also the references to Pascal in Strauss's course on Plato's Gorgias and on Nietzsche: Leo Strauss, *1957 Course on Plato's Gorgias Offered at the University of Chicago*, ed. Devin Stauffer (Chicago: Leo Strauss Center, 2014), 4; Leo Strauss, *1963 Course on Plato's Gorgias Offered at the*

University of Chicago, ed. Devin Stauffer (Chicago: Leo Strauss Center, 2014), 80; Leo Strauss, *1971-72 Course on Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil Offered at the University of Chicago*, ed. Mark Blitz (Chicago: Leo Strauss Center, 2014), 21, 151, 153.

3. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 175. See also *What Is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 181.

4. Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 127. The reference to Pascal is to Brunschvicg fr. 331; the edition of Pascal Strauss used was *Pensées et opuscules* (5e édition revue), ed. M. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Hachette, 1909). The easiest way to find the corresponding numbers in the Faugère, Havet, Lafuma, Le Guern, Michaut, Sellier, and Tourneur editions is to consult https://pensees depascal.fr/. To look up the page references in Brunschvicg's edition, visit https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56034742.

5. *What Is Political Philosophy*, 115–16; see also *On Plato's Symposium*, 4, where Strauss paraphrases Pascal's thought—calling it a "remarkable statement"; elsewhere a "true and beautiful sentence," audio at the end of "the classical solution" in the "What Is Political Philosophy" lecture [https://wslamp70.s3.amazonaws.com/leostrauss/s3fs-public/courses/01%20What%20Is%20Political%20Philosophy_%201955-01.mp3: 42:45-end]—as "we know too little to be dogmatists and too much to be skeptics."

6. The original autograph of Pascal's *Pensées* from *Recueil des originaux*, 489–2, kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and accessible at http://www.penseesdepascal.fr/RO-extraits/RO489-2.pdf.

7. Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 18.

8. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 83n3. See also *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 195n9, and the references to ʿāda (habit, custom) below in the transcript.

9. Author and editor Heinrich Meier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 161–62.

10. Leo Strauss Papers, box 20, folder 20, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

11. A work, primarily on Spinoza, that Strauss had begun in the 1940s.

12. See *Hobbes's Critique of Religion and Related Writings*, tr. and ed. Gabriel Bartlett and Svetozar Y. Minkov (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), 29n9.

13. Double underlined in the original.

14. Cf. Karl Löwith's "Man between Infinites" in *Karl Löwith: Wissen, Glaube und Skepsis*, vol. 3 of *Sämtliche Schriften* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1985), 171–85; cf. Löwith's "Voltaires Bemerkungen zu Pascals *Pensées* in vol. 1 of his *Sämtliche Schriften* (1981), 426-49.

15. Double underlined in the original.